

WORLD YOUTH DAY USA



International Pilgrimage *Leaders Guide*

in preparation for World Youth Day 2016



Secretariat of Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

World Youth Day USA

**International
Pilgrimage
Leaders Guide**

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Secretariat of Laity, Marriage, Family Life, and Youth
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, D.C.

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World Youth Day USA International Pilgrimage Leaders Guide

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Introduction to the Guide

Congratulations! You have decided to lead a pilgrimage to World Youth Day in Kraków, Poland. In so doing, you have embarked on an adventure of planning, organizing, budgeting, visioning, negotiating, packing, and general busy-ness. You have also embarked on a process of helping young Catholics encounter Christ and walk in solidarity with fellow disciples around the world. The goal of this International Pilgrim Leaders Guide is to assist in making the first part less daunting and the second part more powerful.

In August 1993, when Pope St. John Paul II came to Denver, Colorado, for World Youth Day (WYD), it was a transformational experience for youth and young adult ministry across the United States. The World Youth Day pilgrimage, by nature and purpose, is transformative, so it is no surprise that those pilgrims were indeed changed. However, what was unexpected was the change that occurred in the perspectives of ministry *leaders* (from dioceses, parishes, movements, and schools) who coordinated their community's participation in the pilgrimage. Leaders who guide pilgrimages to WYD, whether it is their first, second, or tenth trip, continue to witness to the transformative power of World Youth Day for their ministry and own hearts.

This Leader's Guide seeks to share perspectives, information, and resources that are helpful to internationally-bound World Youth Day pilgrimage leaders.

First, this guide explores *the role you play* as an international pilgrim leader, particularly encouraging you to go beyond organizer to witness. The second section outlines *seven principles to guide international leaders* as they work with young people – offering suggestions on ways to make this event a true pilgrimage of faith. This section examines how World Youth Day stands apart from other ministry initiatives for young disciples by its emphasis on solidarity and encounter with the Holy Father and the Universal Church, as well as the connection to generations of pilgrim saints and spiritual guides that inspire youth and young adults to a life of holiness, equipped with the lessons and experiences of World Youth Day. The third section this Leader's Guide offers some *practical tools* on the size and scope of the World Youth Day event, and how – as leaders – an important part of one's role is to take care of the logistics to enable the pilgrims to fully and spiritually participate in the experience.

Finally, the Leader's Guide will explore ways that you can assist pilgrims **after** World Youth Day. Often, the follow-up perspective is overlooked in all the planning that goes into this event. More than gathering pilgrims for reunions and faith-sharing immediately following the trip – though those are indeed important – this guide will also help you: to encourage pilgrims to pray and reflect upon the pilgrimage and engage in active discernment; to prepare parishes, dioceses, families, and communities to welcome back their pilgrim travelers; to reconnect with stateside pilgrims who celebrated the events of World Youth Day in the United States; and to help pilgrims take concrete and attainable action steps towards missionary discipleship. What happens on the journey down the mountain is just as important as the trip up.

You have an important role as a World Youth Day internationally-bound pilgrimage leader. You and others who have also accepted this challenge now follow in the footsteps of great Catholic leaders before you like the father and patron of this event, St. John Paul II, who as a young priest and bishop in Communist-controlled Kraków, accompanied young adults on their journeys of faith. His example reminds us that this role – the role of a leader who accompanies and journeys with young people on the road of discipleship – can be equally demanding and rewarding. Such leaders have a unique opportunity to invite young people to Christ and to nurture that encounter so that these youth and young adults can take on the mantle of transforming their world, motivated by the lessons, people, inspiration, and experiences of this encounter.

The Pilgrims

The international World Youth Day organizer is not an activities coordinator or a travel agent. Rather, these men and women of faith have been called by God to be **pilgrim guides**, accompanying young people on an incredible journey towards an encounter with Christ, the Church, and the mission of the Gospel. Yet both the hectic and the mundane tasks of preparing youth and young adults for international travel can sometimes cloud the vision of what a pilgrim leader has been called by God to do. It is critical, then, for the leaders to prayerfully reflect on the voyage they are undertaking, on the pilgrims themselves, and their particular role as leader.

Who are the young people who have stepped forward to embark on the journey towards Kraków and World Youth Day? They are sons and daughters of God with a story who have been called by God to mission (even if they themselves may not realize what the mission might be). They come with struggles and pain, as well as joys and anticipation. Some have come to World Youth Day with great expectations and excitement, while others may be uncertain or skeptical of what the trip might offer them. Some are seeking direction, others are looking for affirmation for the path and purpose that prayer and discernment have revealed to them. Still

others are indifferent, who might be going to World Youth Day because of personal motives (i.e. friendship, overseas travel opportunities, or adventure) or due to the expectations of others (i.e. family). Regardless of reason, they have all made it to the path that ultimately leads to Kraków, looking to the pilgrim leader for direction and guidance.

The pilgrim leader, though, has a responsibility to see each pilgrim as they are, with their own story and with their own expectations. The pilgrim leader looks with compassion and mercy on the young people God has placed before them. Each of them has been given a mission – and the leader can help each and every one of the pilgrims discover that calling and act upon it.

Take time to get to know your pilgrims. Pray for each one by name daily. Listen attentively to their stories. Respond to their joys and their frustrations along the way. Help each of them, in their own way, to listen and to respond to God's call in their lives.

The tasks of putting together a pilgrimage can be an all-consuming enterprise, but one of the most important aspects of the pilgrim leader's responsibility is to tend to the spiritual growth of the pilgrims entrusted to them. As

tempting as it might be to focus completely on those essential tasks (especially as the international journey draws closer), the leader must always return to the pilgrims themselves.

The Pilgrim's Community

These young pilgrims, however, are not isolated individuals. Not only do they have their particular concerns and perspectives, they also have a community that raised them, supports them, and sends them forth.

So for each pilgrim, ask yourself:

- Where are they coming from?
- What are the blessings and burdens of the community from which they come?

More often than not, the question asked of World Youth Day pilgrims is usually: "Where are they [the pilgrims] going?" The stories so often told about a pilgrim are the stories of the pilgrim's journey *to* someplace. But any good storyteller (and any good pilgrim leader) will remind other, "That is not the *full* story." All stories start *from* some place, and that place has an impact. In fact, the pilgrim's story is not over until after the hero returns home, back to his or her community (and, in many instances, the story continues on well after the adventure). What tends to be overlooked, in our popular culture as well as in the World Youth Day story, is *the pilgrim's community of*

origin. A pilgrim does not exist in isolation, but is surrounded by an abundance of relationships rooted in a community from which he or she comes.

The Olympics clearly demonstrate to us the role of community. Much of the media coverage surrounding the Olympics is the stories of the athletes and their relationships and experiences back home. We hear the stories of the high school coach who never got rich, but always inspired others to do their best, or maybe the sweetheart back home who is under hardship or the parents who sacrificed everything to make this moment possible. In every city or village who has an Olympian going to compete, everyone there is invested and glued to the television, radio, or news reports during the international competition, wherever that might be.

The story of the pilgrim without the context of the community is incomplete. A million people gather for World Youth Day carrying flags of their countries—the communities from which they came. A full pilgrimage encompasses not just getting from point A to point B. Pilgrims come *from* a community, and journey *as* a community, to encounter the Lord, so that they can *return transformed* to the community from which they came and transform that community.

A pilgrim is only a pilgrim when put in context of the community. Our modern culture often gets lost in the role of the individual. However, deep within the Judeo-Christian tradition is a notion called *corporate identity*. The Jewish people, like many ancient people, saw the world through the lens of the community first, not the individual; what happened to one, happened to all.

The Jewish people held three annual feasts in Jerusalem. These feasts were also pilgrimages, as the Hebrew word “hag” is translated both as *feast* and *pilgrimage*. In the book of Deuteronomy, there are many instructions on how these feasts and pilgrimages should take place. “Three times a year, then, every male among you shall appear before the Lord, your God, in the place which he chooses: at the feast of Unleavened Bread, at the feast of Weeks, and at the feast of Booths” (Dt 16:16). Although the men alone are instructed to go up (to Jerusalem or to wherever the Lord commanded), it was understood that the feast and pilgrimage was for the entire community – and the notion of *corporate identity* was firmly established.

Certainly, practical considerations played a role. The Jews in Galilee would have a much harder time going to the feast/pilgrimage than those in Judea. It would be difficult to leave

behind homes and cattle unprotected and unwatched. Having a corporate identity meant that every Jew participated in the feast—vicariously through the men who went up to Jerusalem and directly by celebrating in their homes. For example, in the Passover feast, the homes of all Jews were free from leaven. The fasting from leaven was not just practiced by those who went to Jerusalem.

The significance of pilgrimage, community, and corporate identity is made most clear in the mission of our Lord Jesus Christ and his founding of the Church. Without the community of the Church, there is no discipleship. The Church, a community of missionary disciples, is a pilgrim people. In Baptism, we become pilgrims on a journey, following in the footsteps of Christ by being joined to him through the Church, the Body of Christ. In and through the Eucharist, the salvific work of the Lord is not only celebrated but is actually and continually made present and participated in. As the source and summit of the Church’s life, the Eucharist is the Church’s, and thus the disciple’s, regular “pilgrimage” in a powerful way. In this full context, the Christian pilgrimage (like the journey of World Youth Day) is a special and physical expression of *being the Church*, reminding pilgrims that their mission in the world has a greater destination *beyond* the

world: in the communion of saints united with the Triune God.

In the Church, pilgrimage and community are inseparable. Not only is the community the backdrop against which the pilgrim's journey to World Youth Day takes place, but it is an experience for the entire community. Those who cannot go are also invited to participate with the same sense of *corporate identity* that is found in the Judeo-Christian notion of a festival/pilgrimage and fulfilled in the Eucharist. They are invited to a solidarity that is meaningful, not marginal. In this way, the

international pilgrim and the stateside pilgrim are united under one mission – and both can truly be part of the story of World Youth Day and be transformed in the process. Everyone, then, can be a pilgrim on this journey.

Understanding the young people on this journey – and the community from which they come (and to where they will be going next) – is key to better appreciating the people that God has put into the leader's care. The tasks of the trip, even the most seemingly important logistical details, are all secondary to the pilgrims themselves.

Encounter, Accompany, Send: The Role of the World Youth Day Pilgrimage Leader

Leading a group of people on an international voyage can be daunting for anyone. With all the logistics to worry about and the responsibility of spiritually accompanying a cohort of disciples, World Youth Day in particular can fill ministry leaders with great anxiety. Yet despite this, during each successive international gathering, thousands of leaders step forward and take on the mantle of a pilgrimage leader, in communion with the Holy Father.

“Do not be afraid!” When we go to proclaim Christ, it is he himself who goes before us and guides us. When he sent his disciples on mission, he promised: “I am with you always” (Mt 28:20). And this is also true for us! Jesus does not leave us alone, he never leaves you alone! He always accompanies you.¹

Pope Francis preached these words to over three million people gathered on Copacabana Beach in Rio de Janeiro and millions more around the world who participated in World Youth Day 2013. He gave everyone a mandate to live their encounter with Jesus Christ, trusting that he accompanies and sends

on mission. The encounter, the accompanying, and the sending do not just happen on their own. As Pope Francis said, Jesus Christ “goes before us and guides us.” The choice to engage in the encounter, to be accompanied, and to be sent is ours, though. It is never forced; it is a free choice in response to an invitation from Jesus Christ. The invitation from Jesus Christ comes in many ways. The ministry of the international pilgrimage leader is invaluable for assisting that invitation.

These leaders serve World Youth Day pilgrims in a unique and privileged way, by helping open the door to Jesus Christ who encounters, accompanies and sends those who participate in the experience. God has called many ministry leaders to the important service to be co-workers in his vineyard. The pilgrimage leader, then, is engaged in the evangelizing work of the Holy Spirit in and through the Church that sends the baptized on mission to encounter, accompany, and send others. Pictures, mementos, and memories are not the only things that should be left from the experience of stateside and international WYDs. Rather, a deeper

¹ Pope Francis, Homily for Closing Mass on Occasion of the XXVIII World Youth Day, Rio de Janeiro, July 28, 2013, 2.

encounter with Jesus Christ and his Church who accompanies the pilgrims and sends them forth to “go and make disciples” (Mt 28:19) should be the first and foremost goal of any World Youth Day pilgrimage leader.

ENCOUNTER

There are a variety of encounters that take place in a World Youth Day pilgrimage: with Jesus Christ, with the Church, with other pilgrims, and with anyone who shares the Catholic faith or not. Each encounter is an opportunity and experience of growth in life in Christ. The international pilgrimage leader helps to make those encounters possible, memorable, and lasting.

An Encounter with Jesus Christ

Pope Francis invites “all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting him encounter them.”² What does it mean to have a “personal encounter with Jesus Christ”? It means experiencing him in the Sacraments, in the Scriptures, in prayer, in others, and in service. This encounter is at the core of who we are as Christians. As Pope Benedict XVI stated, and Pope Francis repeated in his

apostolic exhortation: “Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.”³

World Youth Day is an opportunity offered by the Church to all young people to encounter Christ. Many people have talked about their experience of World Youth Day as “life changing” for them. They experience Christ and his Church in a unique and special way. Leaders need to recognize this opportunity for themselves and for the pilgrims. Sometimes, though, it may seem challenging to some to even consider an encounter with Jesus Christ. As Pope Francis notes, utilizing the often-used language of Pope Benedict XVI, the encounter is really the developing of a “friendship” with Jesus.⁴ Friendship is something that people can easily understand, even if it is with God. The pilgrimage leader can assist pilgrims in developing that relationship for the first time or deepen the young person’s friendship with Jesus Christ. In order to do that, though, the pilgrim leader needs to have and continually renew their own friendship and moments of encounter with Jesus Christ. If this is not happening, then it is very difficult for the

² Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 3.

³ Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, no. 1; cited by Pope Francis in EG, no. 7.

⁴ See *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 266.

leader to be able to assist someone else. Pope Francis in his 2015 World Youth Day Message gave a few ways to renew this encounter daily: through participation in the Sacraments, particularly Eucharist and Reconciliation, reading Sacred Scripture, personal prayer, and serving those in need, particularly the poor.⁵ Ministry leaders are encouraged to tend their relationship with Christ on a constant basis. Once they commit to doing this regularly, they can then invite their pilgrims to do the same before, during, and after the time of pilgrimage.

An Encounter with the Church

The encounter with Jesus Christ is always done in and through his Church. We are a community of faith that is diverse, international, and multicultural. The leader will need to be prepared for this encounter with the Church Universal and her chief shepherd, the Holy Father.

The Pope, who is Vicar of Christ, “is the perpetual and visible source and foundation of the unity both of the bishops and of the whole company of the faithful.”⁶ World Youth Day is a very public opportunity for young people to witness the unity of the Church in the midst of its great diversity.

Who has not been moved by the scene of hundreds of thousands of young people from all over the world together with the Holy Father in silent adoration before the Blessed Sacrament? All ministry leaders need to be prepared and help prepare pilgrims for this encounter with the Church. The preparation can begin with the pilgrimage leader learning more about the variety of cultures they will encounter in Kraków. Reading, asking questions, and participating in Masses of different cultural groups can assist pilgrims in this preparation. Learning more about the diverse spiritual lives of the people of one’s diocese is critical in being able to authentically celebrate and share that experience as part of the international celebration.

An Encounter with Fellow Pilgrims

In most instances, the international pilgrim leader is not going to meet pilgrims for the first time at the airport when they are about to depart for Kraków. This means that there is time to prepare the pilgrims prior to departure for Poland. Retreats, prayer experiences, catechesis and formation, charitable activities and social justice initiatives, fundraisers, and social events are wonderful opportunities for learning and reflection. So, too, are pre-trip communications through emails, social media,

⁵ Pope Francis, Message for the 30th World Youth Day, 3.

⁶ *Lumen Gentium*, no. 32; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 882.

and through parish, diocesan, campus, or other communication tools. The pilgrim leader can also engage with the youth or young adults who are assisting them in the leadership and development of the pilgrimage; while it may not be all the pilgrims, the ministry coordinator can deepen the encounter with young leaders, enabling them to accompany their peers throughout the journey. Forming these relationships in advance of the trip can not only benefit the young people, but also the overall experience of the pilgrim leader.

An Encounter with Others

The time of pilgrimage is also a time of encounter with others along the way. The “others” encountered will be from a variety of backgrounds and life situations. Some of them (including friends, families, and active members of the Church community) will be open to an encounter with the leader and with pilgrims, while others (including distant friends and acquaintances, vendors and secular partners, news media, and the general public) will be indifferent at best and hostile at worst. The important thing in all of these encounters is to constantly be welcoming, loving, and hospitable – truly witnessing “the joy of the Gospel.” Pilgrim leaders can assist them by being aware of their own encounters

with others, as well as supporting the young people through challenging interactions.

The encounters – with Christ, the Church, other pilgrims, and the many others along way – will often lead to continued encounters far beyond the time experienced at World Youth Day. On a practical level, social media, email, letters, and reunions provide means to continue the connections made there. On a deeper level, those encounters and a more mature understanding of encountering Christ and the Church help to support the growth of faith and encourage one another to be of service to the Lord, to the Church, and to the whole world.

ACCOMPANIMENT

Pope Francis says: “The Church will have to initiate everyone – priests, religious and laity – into this “art of accompaniment” which teaches us to remove our sandals before the sacred ground of the other. The pace of this accompaniment must be steady and reassuring, reflecting our closeness and our compassionate gaze which also heals, liberates and encourages growth in the Christian life.”⁷

A pilgrimage leader is not simply an organizer, but one who spiritually accompanies a community (in addition to the young people,

⁷ *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 169.

their families and friends and anyone in the community praying for and connected with the stateside and international pilgrims). Furthermore, the leader is not accompanying pilgrims by him or herself. Jesus Christ, fellow pilgrims, the pope, and others encountered along the way are also accompanying them. Added to this, the leader is one who is also on the journey with others in the group and witnesses a relationship with God. Leaders themselves are pilgrims.

As Pope Francis said, “Although it sounds obvious, spiritual accompaniment must lead others ever closer to God, in whom we attain true freedom.”⁸ Pope Francis in his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* teaches that good spiritual accompaniment includes what might be called growth-inducing acceptance and evangelizing service.⁹

Acceptance and Challenge

None of us is completely or fully-grown in our relationship with Jesus Christ and our neighbor. We are all in need of on-going growth, but often we need others we trust to show us some of the things we need to work on. The pilgrim leader can offer acceptance of another person, but in a way that challenges that person to a deeper relationship and

alignment of life with Christ. Pope Francis warns that we cannot truly know the “person’s situation” before God from “without.”¹⁰ This means that a compassionate listener can challenge another person to greater spiritual growth.

Pope Francis says that the “The Gospel tells us to correct others and to help them grow on the basis of a recognition of the objective evil of their actions (cf. Mt 18:15), but without making judgments about their responsibility and culpability (cf. Mt 7:1; Lk 6:37).”¹¹

The leader can keep this very careful balance through personal recognition of one’s own sinfulness and need for growth in life in Christ. Everyone is in need of the mercy and love of God; a profound awareness of this fact should be an important and meaningful experience during a pilgrimage.

All who experience the international World Youth Days will come with their own struggles, sinfulness, and personal frustrations. Sometimes it is openly shared, and sometimes not. Good leaders recognize this and can accompany these young people through

⁸ *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 170.

⁹ See *Evangelii Gaudium*, nos. 171-173.

¹⁰ *Evangelii Gaudium*, 172.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

their presence, invitation, and encouragement that can lead pilgrims to a greater alignment with the Gospel.

Evangelizing Service

When a pilgrim experiences the witness of compassion and acceptance, this often leads to a desire to do the same for another person. The mercy and healing experienced in Christ strengthens both the pilgrim and the leader to evangelize and serve. As the Holy Father said, “Our personal experience of being accompanied and assisted, and of openness to those who accompany us, will teach us to be patient and compassionate with others, and to find the right way to gain their trust, their openness and their readiness to grow.”¹²

From its start, the international World Youth Day has offered participants an opportunity to be evangelized and to evangelize. Leaders and pilgrims embark on the journey with the hope that they will have a deeper encounter with Jesus Christ and others. Often they experience personal transformation, reconciliation, and renewed life in Christ. This cannot be kept to one’s self.

The leader and pilgrims accompanying one another are “missionary disciples”; they are both followers of Christ (disciples) and sent

by him (missionary). In baptism, we become disciples, followers of Christ, and Christians accompanying one another in and through the Church to deepen this discipleship and to follow the Gospel. Those who are baptized as infants have this choice made for them. The people participating in the international World Youth Day pilgrimage have chosen to be there. Therefore, the opportunity is ripe for these young men and women to deepen their lives as disciples of Christ Jesus, making their personal choice to do so in response to their encounter with the Lord and others who are witnessing Christ to them.

Effective ministry leaders witness this discipleship in all that is said and done on the pilgrimage journey – from simple email communications and announcements prior to and during the pilgrimage to answering the same question from the pilgrims for the fiftieth time. It is all a service to the pilgrims, one that is freely given for the sake of Christ and for those he has placed before us.

The experience of pilgrimage and the encounter with the pilgrims and others will also help the leader grow as a disciple. No matter how educated and experienced, every leader can still grow in their discipleship.

¹² *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 172.

A service that all can give to each other on pilgrimage is living discipleship in a full and intense way, witnessing through word and especially deeds the joy found in life in Christ.

SENDING

Pope Francis asks us: “Where does Jesus send us? There are no borders, no limits: he sends us to everyone. The Gospel is for everyone, not just for some. It is not only for those who seem closer to us, more receptive, more welcoming. It is for everyone. Do not be afraid to go and to bring Christ into every area of life, to the fringes of society, even to those who seem farthest away, most indifferent. The Lord seeks all, he wants everyone to feel the warmth of his mercy and his love.”¹³

The role of the leader continues even after the events of World Youth Day come to an end.

The journey does not conclude, though, when the pilgrim arrives back to their parish, home, workplace, or campus. Instead, it continues onward because all pilgrims are sent forth and called to live as missionary disciples.

The leader assists, equips, and accompanies all pilgrims in this act of “coming down the mountain” so that they might come to a deeper understanding of their experiences

and live the encounter with Jesus in and through his Church among their peers and in their daily lives.

Continuing the Pilgrim Journey

At World Youth Day, the Church puts its trust in the young: pilgrims need to be trusted that they will make the type of “noise” that Pope Francis called them to do at the last gathering in Rio de Janeiro.¹⁴ He challenged young people to assist the Church in “going out into the streets.”¹⁵ The theme of World Youth Day 2016 is “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy” (Mt. 5:7).

Leaders can prepare pilgrims to live mercy more fully in their lives after the pilgrimage experience, especially through works of mercy, charity, and justice and through depending on the Lord’s mercy, especially in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.¹⁶

The pilgrim journey is a lifelong one that might include additional World Youth Day experiences, possibly even being a pilgrimage leader in the future. A leader for this World Youth Day can identify others who may serve well as future leaders. World Youth Day leaders have been called by God for this service, often through the invitation of

¹³ Homily for Closing Mass on the Occasion of the XXVIII World Youth Day, Rio de Janeiro, July 28, 2013, no. 1.

¹⁴ Pope Francis, Meeting with Young People from Argentina, XXVIII World Youth Day, July 25, 2013.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2237-2449.

another. Now the leaders are called also to do the same for a younger person, inviting them to take on the mantle of leadership.

The lifelong pilgrim lives the encounter with Jesus Christ in daily life. Gathering stateside and international pilgrims after World Youth Day can help all young people share and integrate their experiences and, ultimately, build upon them. For example, many World Youth Day pilgrims are also discerning their vocation in life. The leader assists in this discernment process by not only witnessing to one's own vocation in life, but by also encouraging pilgrims to consider the vocation of marriage, consecrated life, or priesthood. On a practical note, it might involve good conversations during the journey and hosting a gathered session in the weeks or months following World Youth Day that helps youth and young adults explore the notions of vocation and discernment.

Living the encounter with Jesus Christ also means being of service, which evangelizes others. Pope Francis teaches that “evangelizing means bearing personal witness to the love of God, it is overcoming our selfishness, it is serving by bending down to

wash the feet of our brethren, as Jesus did.”¹⁷

Most young people want to be of service to others, but often do not know how. The pilgrim leader can assist youth and young adults in reflecting on what ways they can be of service to the Church and to those in need in the world, particularly the poor and by providing opportunities or pointing to opportunities to serve. This is our way of showing the love of Christ to the world. The leader can witness to the fact that “to love means to serve and service increases love.”¹⁸

Sending Forth

The World Youth Day gathering, whether it occurs overseas or in various places throughout the United States, will ultimately come to an end. Therefore, the leader needs to *send forth* those who gather, but not simply by dispersing participants at the end of the gathering. People have changed during the time of pilgrimage due to the various encounters and the accompaniment, even if they do not fully perceive or understand it.

Similar to the dismissal at every Mass, World Youth Day pilgrims need to “go, glorifying the Lord” by their lives.¹⁹ As Pope Francis confidently told millions of pilgrims as they

¹⁷ Homily for Closing Mass on the Occasion of the XXVIII World Youth Day, Rio de Janeiro, July 28, 2013, 3.

¹⁸ Pope Benedict XVI, “Meeting with Volunteers of the XXVI World Youth Day, August 21, 2011.

¹⁹ *Roman Missal*, Dismissal.

prepared to leave Rio de Janeiro in 2013, Jesus “not only sends us, he accompanies us, he is always beside us in our mission of love.”²⁰

The pilgrims have followed the leader on pilgrimage and, hopefully, encountered Jesus Christ who accompanied them on the journey. This is the life of the disciple, the one who is sent. When Jesus sent out the seventy-two, he had them take little on the journey, beyond trust in him (cf. Lk 10:1-12). They returned to him joyfully telling stories of all that was done in his name (cf. Lk 10:17-20). Jesus Christ continues to do the same today. Both the leader and the pilgrims are not only disciples, but they are sent on mission – they are “missionary disciples.”

Living as Missionary Disciples

When he spoke to the volunteers at the end of World Youth Day in Rio de Janeiro, Pope Francis said “the most beautiful service we can give as missionary disciples” is “to prepare the way so that all people may know, meet and love the Lord.”²¹

Just as the leader and the pilgrims have encountered Jesus Christ, so they have a mission to assist others in having such an encounter or deepening their relationship with

him. St. John Paul II, the father and patron saint of World Youth Day, explained this dynamic very well when he said, “our personal encounter with Christ bathes life in new light, sets us on the right path, and sends us out to be his witnesses.”²²

The response to the personal encounter as a witness sent by Jesus Christ into the world is called living as a “missionary disciple.” This term captures a reality which is central to the work of the New Evangelization as the Church moves more fully from maintenance to mission.²³ Pope Francis uses the term very often in his preaching and catechesis and explains it clearly in his apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*.

In virtue of their baptism, all the members of the People of God have become missionary disciples (cf. *Mt* 28:19). **All the baptized**, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the faith, **are agents of evangelization**, and it would be insufficient to envisage a plan of evangelization to be carried out by professionals while the rest of the faithful would simply be passive recipients. **The new evangelization calls for personal**

²⁰ Homily for Closing Mass on the Occasion of the XXVIII World Youth Day, Rio de Janeiro, July 28, 2013, 1.

²¹ Pope Francis, Meeting with Volunteers of the XXVIII World Youth Day, July 28, 2013.

²² Pope John Paul II, Message of the Holy Father on the Occasion of the XVII World Youth Day, July 25, 2001.

²³ See XII Ordinary Synod of Bishops (2012), Proposition 22.

involvement on the part of each of the baptized. Every Christian is challenged, here and now, to be actively engaged in evangelization; indeed, anyone who has truly experienced God’s saving love does not need much time or lengthy training to go out and proclaim that love. **Every Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus: we no longer say that we are “disciples” and “missionaries”, but rather that we are always “missionary disciples”.**²⁴

Bringing Christ to others (as a missionary disciple) compels one to know and live the faith. Being catechized does not simply mean *knowing* the faith; it means also *witnessing* to it in our lives. Ongoing adult formation in the faith is a dynamic process that continues to take place throughout our life.

Additionally, growth in faith is not done alone; rather, it is the work of Christ within us and the relationship that we have with him nurtured through prayer, the sacramental life, and our witness and service. Leaders are called to be regularly engaged in these efforts (ongoing formation, witnessing to our faith) if they are to model this for pilgrims.

The parish is a regular place where leaders and pilgrims are both nurtured by Christ through the community of faith, where they can grow in Christ through the sacraments, and where they can encounter Christ in those around them, especially in the poor and the suffering.

Yet leaders and pilgrims cannot remain within the comfort of the parish understood narrowly within its buildings. They (and any Christian for that matter) need to move outward to others and assist them in encountering Christ.²⁵ Leaders and pilgrims are encouraged to look beyond their parish boundaries and buildings to find more settings where their call to missionary discipleship can take root and flourish.

Missionary disciples are sent to not only preach, but to *heal* (see Lk 9:2,10:9). The world is in need of so much healing – in need of life-giving love. All the baptized can and must be bearers of love. The baptized share in the mission of Jesus Christ as priest, prophet, and king.²⁶ Faith is not meant to be kept to oneself or locked in church; instead, it is meant to be compassionately shared with all. Good leaders embrace their role to heal the woundedness of the pilgrims in their care.

²⁴ *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 120. Emphasis added.

²⁵ See *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 121.

²⁶ Cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 10; 31; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 783-786.

The pilgrims themselves can experience this healing ministry from their leaders – and ideally, be sent to heal those around them in the future – from their friends and families who struggle or are wounded to the larger society and community where they study, work, and live their young adult lives.

Imagine what will happen throughout the world when the millions of World Youth Day pilgrims are actively engaged in works of missionary discipleship, healing, and mercy, thanks in large part to the direction of their dedicated and mission-focused leaders.

Conclusion: Be Not Afraid

Understandably, it can seem overwhelming to be a World Youth Day pilgrimage leader once we recognize all the ways God calls us to effective leadership and missionary discipleship – and to create a memorable and holy space for pilgrims to have an encounter with God, with the Church, and with others.

Trying to live and lead this mission can be frightening. Yet Christ continually reminds us, as he reminded the first missionary disciples: “Do not be afraid...” (Mt 28:10) The World Youth Day experience, with its massive size and participation of lay leaders, priests and

religious, the bishops, and the Holy Father himself, reminds us that we are not alone on this journey as leaders.

Pilgrimage leaders should know that they are united as missionary disciples across the globe – from those leading pilgrims to the global celebration in Kraków to those organizing stateside and digital experiences in the United States to international Catholic leaders planning local events taking place in parishes and dioceses on every continent. In solidarity with those leaders, and in service to Christ, who sends us, we gain our strength for the work ahead of us.

As Pope Francis told the vast crowd of pilgrims and leaders in Rio de Janeiro as they were about to embark on a mission of service in the world (and which can be applied to the work of the pilgrim leader today):

Jesus did not say: “one of you go”, but “all of you go”: we are sent together.

Dear young friends, be aware of the companionship of the whole Church and also the communion of the saints on this mission. When we face challenges together, then we are strong, we discover resources we did not know we had.²⁷

²⁷ Homily for Closing Mass on the Occasion of the XXVIII World Youth Day, Rio de Janeiro, July 28, 2013, 2.

Foundations: Pilgrimage and World Youth Day

In Kraków in the 1940s, a young Karol Wojtyła (who was studying in the underground seminary run by the Archbishop of Kraków) was inspired and mentored by Jan Tyranowski, a local tailor and the young adult ministry leader for Wojtyła's parish community, St. Stanislaus Kostka Church in Debnicki. The parish, run by the Salesians of Don Bosco (a group dedicated to outreach to youth and young adults around the world), was a fitting setting for the seminarian to recognize the value of ministerial leadership and its impact on young people. After ordination and despite Communist proscriptions against religious gatherings, throughout the 1950s Fr. Wojtyła would risk exposure to the authorities in regular outings with university students, young adults, and young married couples that included prayer, catechesis, retreats, and charitable acts of service, as well as in-home Masses, saint-day social events, and skiing and kayaking excursions. In fact, it was during one of these outings in 1958 when Fr. Wojtyła was summoned to Warsaw to accept his appointment as the Auxiliary Bishop of Kraków; then, after the formalities in the capital city, he returned to the young people in their canoes to continue his ministry with them.

These moments undoubtedly shaped the future saint and very likely had an influence on his outreach to youth and young adults when he became Pope John Paul II in 1978. During the Jubilee Year of Redemption, which began in 1983 to commemorate 1950 years since the death and resurrection of Christ, the Holy Father called a special gathering of young people, which would take place on Palm Sunday 1984, one of the last acts of the jubilee celebration. With the momentum of this event, coupled with another gathering the following Palm Sunday to mark the United Nations' International Year of Youth, the pope declared the institution of World Youth Day in December 1985. Ever since, the Catholic Church around the world has annually celebrated young people in local and global gatherings which continue to this day.

The origins of this story, though, lie in the foundations of pastoral leadership in service to youth and young adults: first received, then given. Those who lead pilgrimages to World Youth Day today follow in the footsteps of Karol Wojtyła – and take from him the mantle to teach, inspire, and accompany another generation of missionary disciples.

In the role of pilgrimage leader, there are several important realities to pass on to the pilgrims on their journey to Kraków for World Youth Day. While the specific points are ultimately up to the discretion of the leader and the local community, below are seven principles that could be helpful for all participants from the United States who are bound for the international experience.

1. **World Youth Day is a *pilgrimage* (not a vacation).**
2. **World Youth Day is an *encounter* with the Universal Church.**
3. **World Youth Day is a *celebration* in community and communion.**
4. **United States pilgrims can be proud of their *heritage of mercy*.**
5. **Strong *spiritual preparation* is essential to the pilgrim journey.**
6. **Be open to the *Holy Spirit*, wherever he may be leading you.**
7. **The end of World Youth Day is only the *beginning*.**

These seven are not the only points to pass onto the young men and women within the leader's care, but they do give a comprehensive outline of the important aspects of the journey.

1. World Youth Day is a *pilgrimage* (not a vacation).

When pilgrims sign up for World Youth Day, their reasons are varied: some are looking to travel abroad; some are looking for an enjoyable experience with friends and community; some are hoping to meet new friends or find a significant other; some have a passion for the host country or the rich heritage and history of that land; some will come simply because they were invited; some are seeking inspiration and illumination; some want to meet the pope and the bishops; some want to experience different cultures, foods, and people from foreign lands; some have gone to this or a similar event before and hope to recapture the spirit of that first trip; some need rest.

The reasons will vary from noble and enlightened to mundane and even silly. One half million people from the United States have traveled to an international World Youth Day at some point in the past thirty years – and each one had their own reason for the journey. The pilgrim leader is not in a position to judge why a person chooses to go to World Youth Day; however, it is the leader's prerogative to point pilgrims in new directions.

First and foremost, it is vital that participants understand that World Youth Day is a pilgrimage, not a vacation or field trip. Pilgrimages are joyful and challenging journeys. Many of your participants have probably been on several vacations throughout their lives. It can be tempting to approach World Youth Day as one vacation or adventure among many. The pilgrim journey is so much more.

On a vacation, the goal is rest.

On an excursion, the goal is adventure.

On a pilgrimage, the goal is transformation.

People in the United States are often introduced to the idea of “pilgrimage” in high school through literature classes when they read Geoffrey Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*, a fictional collection of stories shared by people on pilgrimage together. The idea of pilgrimage, then, might be seen as something old, archaic, even outdated – especially in an era when young people can find their destinations online without ever having to physically go anywhere or consult a map. A more modern tale of a pilgrimage can be found in the 2010 independent film, *The Way*, about one man’s journey from the mountains of France across northern Spain along the Camino de Santiago to the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela where pilgrims have traveled to venerate the tomb of St. James the Apostle. In this movie,

the main character makes a trip to Europe to identify the body of his son who died making the pilgrimage; initially skeptical of such a dangerous spiritual experience, the father decides to continue the journey to honor his son – and soon finds his own faith illuminated along the path and in the company of new friends. He is transformed.

In Europe and in the Middle East especially, pilgrimage has a very long tradition. People go to the Holy Land to visit the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, the Church on Mount Tabor in Galilee, and the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, among many other important sites. Pilgrims go to Italy to pray at the tombs of St. Peter, St. Paul, and great martyrs in Rome, or to the Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi in Umbria. Pilgrims travel to France to visit the Grotto at Our Lady of Lourdes, to Portugal to visit the Chapel of the Apparitions in Fatima, and to Poland to visit the Jasna Gorna Monastery to see the Black Madonna of Czestochowa. Europe and the Middle East are filled with countless sites that date back to the origins of Christianity. In the United States, however, there are not as many pilgrimage sites primarily because, in terms of world history, America is a relatively new country and its religious history is still being written. Many Catholics in the United States have grown up without a significant experience

of pilgrimage and without it marking their spirituality. World Youth Day presents Catholic youth and young adults from the United States with a chance that few of their peers have ever experienced.

A pilgrimage is not an escape from the everyday experiences of life, like a vacation or excursion. While there are certainly exciting and enjoyable moments to World Youth Day, the primary purpose of a pilgrimage is not about peaceful rest, entertainment, or sports. Rather, a pilgrimage helps one to better appreciate the everyday moments of life, both the good and the challenging, and prepares one for the road ahead. It is often a journey to a holy place, in the hope that the sacredness of the place will illuminate the traveler's soul. The pilgrim enters the "struggle" of a pilgrimage with the hope that God is doing great work within him or her. Within that struggle, the Lord calls the pilgrim to a deeper relationship with him. In all this, the end goal of this journey is transformation.

Interestingly, in the case of World Youth Day, the destination is the pilgrim journey itself. Kraków (or any World Youth Day host city for that matter) may be the destination on an airline boarding pass, but the experience in preparation for the central events, the experiences during those activities, and the return home are all part of the goal of that

particular pilgrim journey. Consider the biblical analogy of the Transfiguration: the destination that Jesus took Peter, James, and John was the entirety of Mount Tabor – including the process of going up the mountain, the transforming experience atop the summit, and the journey down the mountain. It can be tempting to limit Mount Tabor to its peak, but the pathway up the hill was just as critical to the experience. As St. Luke tells the story (Lk 9:28-36), when Simon Peter asks to remain at the top a little bit longer, the evangelist states: "But he did not know what he was saying" (Lk 9:33). Connecting this story to the World Youth Day experience, it would be foolish to think that the true destination was simply the places and events in Kraków. Rather, the entire process is the pilgrimage destination. Furthermore, the goal of World Youth Day is not to make it to Kraków, but to encounter the universal Church – from the pope to the young people from other nations to the local citizens of the host country to one's fellow travel companions, all of which happens at every stage of the journey.

The key for pastoral leaders, then, is to help pilgrims see themselves as pilgrims, to remind them of this basic understanding of a pilgrimage, and to open their minds and hearts to new ideas regarding the destination and the reasons for undertaking such an incredible journey of faith.

2. World Youth Day is an encounter with the Universal Church

World Youth Day is a pilgrimage that calls every single pilgrim (no matter from where they come) to “go into the deep” and to immerse themselves in a truly remarkable way in Catholic faith and life (that is, the Church). In a sense, the summit of the World Youth Day mountaintop experience is not the host city or country; nor is it the events and activities that will take place during the week, though these are all important aspects of the journey. The mountaintop of World Youth Day is the *Church who is ever young*, gathered universally with the Holy Father—the Church who is the Body and Bride of Christ. The summit of the mountain is a faith community bigger than the local realities of any single pilgrim, encompassing both Heaven and earth. As leaders know, the Catholic Church is quite large when seen from a global perspective. Over 1.3 billion people around the globe²⁸ comprise the membership of the Body of Christ on earth. It may not be something many young people yet grasp, especially if their Catholic experience is limited to their local parish, campus, or diocese. Yet throughout the world, fellow Catholics speak hundreds of languages and come from varied

backgrounds and cultures, but are united by a common faith. The international component of World Youth Day allows young people to experience, in a very intense way, a unique glimpse of this universality. At World Youth Day 2013 in Rio de Janeiro, for example, pilgrims registered from 175 out of the 195 countries of the world at the time. Catechesis was offered in 25 different languages. There was an estimated 3.7 million people at the closing Mass.²⁹ At World Youth Day, the American participants may not understand all of the words that other young pilgrims speak, but the common language of Catholic devotions, service, and the Mass can unite their mutual heritage of faith.

Encourage your pilgrims to meet those beyond their home diocese and beyond their own country – and to listen, smile, serve, and humbly share their experiences and love of the faith with those from different countries and cultures. Help them to understanding the meaning of encounter – to not only meet someone new, but to learn from them and walk alongside them. In addition to this international dimension, one of the most celebrated aspects of World Youth Day is the ability for young people to personally encounter

²⁸ Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University, 2014, <http://cara.georgetown.edu/>

²⁹ See <http://saltandlighttv.org/blog/world-youth-day/wyd-statistics-from-rios-local-organizing-committee>.

the pope. However, the affection for the pontiff among pilgrims may be limited to his international celebrity status. But there is so much more than that. On a deeper level, the Holy Father is, quite literally, the father of a family that is the universal Church. It is the pope who serves as the unifying role model for all the WYD pilgrims from around the world.

When Pope John Paul II inaugurated the World Youth Day gathering, he himself wanted to spend time with and encounter young people.

“Even though he is getting older, the young people urge the Pope to be young,” wrote John Paul II in his memoir, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* (1994). “They do not permit him to forget his experience, his discovery of youth, and its great importance for the life of every man.”³⁰

The World Youth Day experiences, then, are as much a blessing to the Holy Father as they are to the young men and women who make the journey. During the WYD events, the pope takes time to share with participants how the Gospel applies to their particular perspective as young people. He unpacks the mystery and meaning of the paschal experience through his words during the Via Crucis (Way of the Cross), Candlelight Vigil, and Closing Mass.

Along with the pope, many bishops from throughout the world are also present at World Youth Day, as fellow shepherds of the dioceses where they have been called to serve. This event is a wonderful opportunity for these bishops to come in contact with the Church in her young people through catechetical sessions, national gatherings, reconciliation, and through simple encounters along the streets.

Participating bishops look forward to meeting the young people and spending time with them.

Encourage your pilgrims to seek out bishops, to listen to their words and catechesis, to thank them for their ministry, to engage them in conversation, and to pray alongside them on the journey. World Youth Day stands out as a special experience of the Universal Church, where one can literally see the diversity of cultures that make up the “body of Christ” and the shepherds who guide them, who “smell like the sheep” as they walk together along the pilgrim road. Helping your pilgrims understand and appreciate this dimension to the trip will make them more aware of the breadth and depth of the Church that goes beyond their local experiences. It can give new meaning to the phrase they repeat each Sunday: “I believe in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church...”

³⁰ Pope John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*. Ed. Vittorio Messori. Trans. Jenny McPhee and Martha McPhee. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1994), 125.

3. World Youth Day is a celebration in community and communion.

Being in the midst of millions of young people, all wildly enthusiastic about their Catholic faith and their love of Christ and the Gospel, is breathtaking and truly exciting. Throughout the week, as one walks through the streets of the host city, the contagious buzz of young pilgrims meeting each other, singing songs, praying with one voice, and experiencing new things is quite palpable. World Youth Day is truly a celebration, and that energy can be felt by not only the participants, but by local and international observers, the media, and bystanders – Catholic and non-Catholic alike.

Massive events like this can sometimes gain a reputation of being just a party, or as some have put it, “Catholic Woodstock.” This misses what is really going on at World Youth Day: it is a celebration of faith, of being in community and communion with fellow believers and travelers, all seeking the Lord, and perhaps pleasantly surprised they do not have to walk that path alone. All of this expresses itself in a joyful energy that is hard to contain and can be misinterpreted if left unchecked or not

understood. The pilgrim leader, then, must help to direct such energy towards true celebration, so that pilgrims themselves do not fall into the temptation of seeing such a gathering as a fun overseas excursion. This is why spiritual preparation and accompaniment is so crucial to the pilgrim experience, so that the joyful aspects of World Youth Day are contextualized in authentic happiness.

Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati, patron of young adults, once remarked: “true happiness, oh young people, does not consist in the pleasures of the world, or in earthly things, but in peace of conscience which we only have if we are pure of heart and mind.”³¹ In a note to his sister (which Pope Benedict XVI referenced in his 2012 WYD message), Frassati commented, “You ask me if I am happy. How could I not be? As long as faith gives me strength, I am happy. A Catholic could not be other than happy... The goal for which we were created involves a path which has its thorns, but it is not a sad path. It is joy, even when it involves pain.”³² Happiness at World Youth Day, then, is about naming and finding joy in the graces given to pilgrims – that all blessings have their origin in God.

³¹ Frassati, Pier Giorgio, “Letter to Members of the Catholic Youth of Pollone (July 29, 1923),” qtd. in *Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati: An Ordinary Christian* by Maria Di Lorenzo. Trans. Robert Ventresca (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2004), 123.

³² Frassati, Pier Giorgio, “Letter to Luciana Frassati (February 14, 1925),” qtd. in “Message of the Holy Father on the Occasion of the Twenty-Seventh World Youth Day” by Pope Benedict XVI. (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2012), 6.

Discovering these graces, though, is best done in the company of good companions. One of the important aspects of World Youth Day is that pilgrims journey in groups – some large, some small, many in between. When the journey gets difficult, having companions makes the challenges more bearable. In times of incredible joy on the way, having companions to share those moments can create lasting bonds. Good companions hold pilgrims accountable and remind them to seek God in the midst of their everyday life. Encourage Christian companionship and camaraderie throughout the preparation, yet also remind pilgrims to keep their circles open to new people, so as not to fall into the temptation of cliques and isolation from the community.

In addition to a community of peers, World Youth Day also offers young men and women an opportunity to connect through time and space to the great saints and holy people of the past, as well as to mentors and spiritual guides of the present. Encouraging pilgrims to follow the example of the communion of saints, especially those connected to Kraków and to young people (including St. John Paul II and St. Faustina Kowalska of Poland; St. Thérèse of Lisieux in France; St. Kateri Tekakwitha of North America; St. James the Apostle, who walked with Jesus; and Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati, the young “man of the beatitudes”

from Turin, Italy) can be a wonderful aid in the World Youth Day experience, especially since meeting those holy men and women, or their sacred sites, can be done throughout the preparation process in the U.S. and at the event itself in Kraków. The saints give pilgrims a recipe for the demands of holiness and Christ’s invitation to perfection. The great spiritual leader Thomas Merton calls this revelation of God’s will for humanity a path to “simple sainthood” – to abandon ourselves, to be reconciled, and to be loving. Becoming “saints” does not require that pilgrims perform miracles or write volumes of theological text; it only requires an openness to greatness and trusting in God—responding to his grace and giving our whole selves to him. Encouraging pilgrims to look deeper at their own lives and how they can imitate the saints can be a helpful way to contextualize and deepen the celebration that occurs at World Youth Day. In addition, helping pilgrims find mentors and spiritual guides is also crucial to the journey, so that they might have someone to follow, someone to whom they might pose difficult questions, and someone who can help them to understand better the graces that God has placed along their path towards World Youth Day. While striving for holiness themselves, such pastoral ministers can also hold pilgrims accountable for their actions and assist them from a disciplined and experienced perspective.

4. United States pilgrims can be proud of their *heritage of mercy*.

When participating in World Youth Day, pilgrims will not only be representing their parish, campus, diocese, or ecclesial movement; they will also be representing their country. Yet national identification must be carefully balanced at an international event like this.

On one extreme, some U.S. participants can exhibit an excessive pride in their home country at the risk of alienating those from other nations by their isolation, haughtiness, or indifference. On another extreme, some travelers may overtly avoid associating with the United States altogether, for fear that they will be seen in a negative light by others. It is important to stress to American pilgrims that both of these extremes should be avoided in their preparation for and experiences at the international World Youth Day.

The key thing for pilgrims from the United States to understand is that theirs is a heritage of pioneering, unity, and mercy: ideals that are worth identifying with, celebrating, and humbly sharing in the international setting of World Youth Day.

The most recognized American experience was the one that was begun by the pioneers,

revolutionaries, and trailblazers who crossed literal and figurative mountains to seek out what was on the other side. For example, consider the early settlers, who forged a path through the unknown wilderness; the Founding Fathers, who pioneered a new way of government, including emerging renewed striving for religious liberty; the peaceful advocates of rights of the poor, the vulnerable, and disenfranchised; and the creative minds who scaled the mountains of science, engineering, and technology to bring new ideas to life. In the Church, we celebrate the pioneers of faith like St. Kateri Tekakwitha, an Algonquin-Mohawk young adult who boldly converted to Roman Catholicism despite tribal objections and persecution; St. John Neumann, C.Ss.R., founder of the Catholic school system in the United States; Fr. Michael McGivney, founder of the Knights of Columbus; and Fr. Augustus Tolton, a former slave who became the first black Catholic priest in the United States, among many others.

Another ideal of the American experience is unity amidst diversity. As a nation of immigrants from the very beginning, the United States has had to wrestle with the plurality of backgrounds and cultures that comprise the American people. While the history of intercultural and interracial relationships has not always been cooperative or benign, it is a

goal written into the foundational documents (“We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal...” from the Declaration of Independence) and national motto (“E pluribus unum,” that is “out of many, one”). In a sense, this desire for national unity, despite the obstacles, has fueled suffragettes like Susan B. Anthony and abolitionists like Frederick Douglass, leading to the great crusades for civil and workers’ rights championed by Rosa Parks, the Selma marchers and freedom riders of the 1960s, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Cesar Chavez, among others.

Even beyond these two, a third and perhaps “most Catholic” American ideal is a quest to make the United States a land of mercy, compassion, and refuge for the oppressed. Engraved on the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty is a gentle invitation (written by American poet Emma Lazarus) to all who pass by: “Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free.” The poem declares the statue to represent the “Mother of Exiles” who mercifully accepts “the homeless” and the “tempest-tost.”

Over the past several centuries, many of the men and women who have modeled this American ideal of mercy, compassion, and refuge have been prominent figures in the

Catholic community in this country: Sr. Rose Phillipine Duchesne, R.S.C.J., who came to America from France to minister to the Native Americans in the frontier areas of Missouri and Kansas; Mother Elizabeth Ann Seton, S.C., who started the first Catholic school in the country in Maryland and founded the first American religious community, the Sisters of Charity; Fr. Damien de Veuster, SS.CC. and Sr. Marianne Cope, O.S.F., who ministered among the lepers of Molokai colony in the Hawaiian islands; Mother Francis Xavier Cabrini, M.S.C., who came to the United States to care for the poor Italian immigrants and orphans, and established many homes and hospitals across the country; Mother Katharine Drexel, S.B.S., who ministered to Native Americans and African Americans in her native Philadelphia; Msgr. Edward Flanagan, founder of the Boys Town orphanage in Nebraska; Dorothy Day, Obl.O.S.B., a journalist, social activist, and founder of the Catholic Worker Movement who Pope Francis praised in his 2015 visit to the United States, saying “her social activism, her passion for justice and for the cause of the oppressed, were inspired by the Gospel, her faith, and the example of the saints”; Thomas Merton, the Cistercian monk of the twentieth century whom Pope Francis called “a man of prayer, a thinker who challenged the certitudes of his time and opened new horizons for souls and for the Church...a man of dialogue, a

promoter of peace between peoples and religions”; and Fr. Mychal Judge, O.F.M., chaplain to the New York Fire Department and minister to the homeless, AIDS victims, and recovering alcoholics, who was the first official victim of the 9/11 attacks at the World Trade Center while offering assistance to rescuers and the injured. Their examples are but a few that provide a blueprint for mercy to those most in need of comfort and healing—a mercy central to our Catholic faith yet also embedded in the history of our nation. As Abraham Lincoln said only a few weeks prior to his assassination, preaching a “gospel” of reconciliation and mercy to a war-weary nation in 1865:

With malice towards none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation’s wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.

It is true that some might feel ashamed, afraid, or embarrassed to let others know of their American heritage in international settings like World Youth Day. One might be worried that the haughty or rude actions of other citizens could define them as well. However, when in

the company of Americans like Abraham Lincoln, St. Kateri Tekakwitha, Dorothy Day, Thomas Merton, St. Katharine Drexel, Cesar Chavez, and Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., there are many great reasons to claim a national identity at World Youth Day. A task for pilgrim leaders is to help youth and young adults understand the heritage of mercy of these great icons of American history and to follow in their footsteps by responding to the Lord’s call.

When your pilgrims travel outside the United States, will people see in them the one who said “with malice towards none, with charity for all”? Will they recognize, in U.S. pilgrims, the embodiment of the poem found on the Statue of Liberty: “give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free”? Most importantly, will they see American young people who, above all else, follow the one who mercifully says, “Come to me, all who you labor and are heavy burdened, for I will give you rest” (Mt 11:28)?

Being an American Catholic at World Youth Day means humbly bringing the highest ideals of the nation (pioneering, unity, and mercy) and sharing them with one’s international peers, while learning from others’ traditions and cultures, so that they might come back to their native land inspired and ready to incorporate all of that into their local communities.

5. Strong *spiritual preparation* is essential to the pilgrim journey.

World Youth Day is an event like none other. Consider all of the moving parts that comprise this unique pilgrimage of faith: the chance to visit a country with its unique history, culture, and faith story; the opportunity to encounter people from around the world; the daily catechesis and prayer experiences, including the Way of the Cross, the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and the Prayer Vigil including Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament with the Holy Father; continually walking and traveling to various activities, programs, and locations around the host city; listening to inspiring words from the bishops; the presence and wisdom of the Holy Father; and the jubilant Closing Mass, at which the participants are sent out on a mission back in their native lands.

For pilgrims to fully experience these moments and recognize Jesus in their midst, they must be spiritually prepared for the journey and all its parts. Just as Olympic athletes would train and prepare themselves (physically and mentally) for their sporting competitions, so too must World Youth Day participants train and prepare themselves (physically, mentally, *and spiritually*) for the incredible opportunity to meet Jesus on the pilgrim path. Pastoral leaders, then, must help their pilgrims not only with fundraising,

safety tips, and travel itineraries, but also their faith formation and spiritual development throughout the preparation process. That way, when those moments of encounter take place, the pilgrim better understands and appreciates the graces God has given to them in the midst of the massive crowds and awe-inspiring experiences of World Youth Day.

One of the first spiritual dimensions to share with pilgrims is the sacredness of the physical destination itself. It is important to stress how important the Catholic faith is to the people of Poland and how integrated it is into the architecture, history, and culture of its cities, most especially Kraków – where churches can be found on nearly every corner of the old city. Consider spending time talking about the specific holy sites the pilgrims will encounter and tie it to the pilgrim experience:

On Wawel Hill in the heart of Krakow can be found the origins of Poland and the Catholic faith of its people. Atop the hill stands the Wawel Royal Arch-Cathedral Basilica of Saints Stanislaus and Wenceslaus with its ten centuries of rich Polish history. On the grounds of this basilica, it is believed that St. Stanislaus of Szczepanów, one of the primary patron saints of Poland, was martyred by the king. The saint's body rests in this place to this day. And it is in this church where newly ordained Karol

Wojtyła celebrated his first Mass in Saint Leonard's Crypt in 1946, was consecrated as a bishop in 1958, and served as Archbishop of Krakow from 1964 to 1978.

In the center of town, in Kraków's Main Market Square, can be found the towering Kościół Mariacki, the Church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, with its grand asymmetrical bell towers flanking the entrance and interior blue ceiling lifting one's thoughts upward to Heaven and forward to the high altar. In this sacred place and around the square, one can imagine the kings, queens, and princes of Poland through the ages – including the benevolent King Casimir III the Great, Saint Jadwiga (Hedwig) the Queen, and Saint Casimir the Crown Prince, whose royal mercy and compassion earned them the devotion of the Polish people.

Between the Main Market Square and Wawel Hill can be found Franciszkańska Street, a sacred avenue where the fifteenth-century Archbishop's Palace, the neo-Gothic Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi, and the Dominican Church of the Holy Trinity can all be found. These three places, so near to each other, offer a glimpse into the life and ministry of Karol Wojtyła. He studied for the priesthood in secret during World War II at the Palace, escaped for quiet prayer in the Franciscan Basilica (where

Saint Maximilian Kolbe also lived for a short time), and, as Archbishop of Krakow, first learned of the life of Pier Giorgio Frassati at the Dominican Church and, there, declared him "the man of the beatitudes." He would later beatify Frassati in 1990 and name him a patron for young adults and World Youth Day.

South of Old Town, in the Łagiewniki district, of Kraków, pilgrims will find the Sanctuary of Divine Mercy, a large modern basilica built between 1999 and 2002 on the grounds of the convent of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy where Sr. Faustina Kowalska, OLM, is also buried. Here visitors can learn of the rich tradition of pilgrimage in Poland – beginning with the devotion to Our Lady of Czestochowa in the Middle Ages and continuing to this day in the Łagiewniki area. Also nearby is a new pilgrimage site, the new Sanctuary of Saint John Paul II and the accompanying "Be Not Afraid" Center, completed in 2015 to commemorate the life and legacy of Kraków's native son.

These are just a few of the sites around Kraków that speak of its rich history and holiness. Explaining to pilgrims the greater context for these sacred places (and many others they will visit in Poland) can enrich their travels within the city of Kraków. In addition, the Jewish history of this part of Poland is significant and would be important to share with the pilgrims

(including the Kazimierz district, where Jews had lived for centuries; the Podgórze area, which was made into a Jewish ghetto during WWII; and the remains of the concentration camps at Auschwitz and Birkenau). Such conversations may be difficult for some, but it is an opportunity to discuss atrocities against human dignity and life, challenges of religious intolerance and persecution, and the need for interreligious dialogue and religious freedom to advance true solidarity and peace. If visiting these locations is part of the itinerary, it is essential for leaders to spiritually prepare pilgrims for what they will experience there and to offer appropriate opportunities for processing afterwards.

Strong spiritual preparation should also include equipping pilgrims for receiving and engaging with the daily catechesis with an open mind and heart. It is important to stress to pilgrims that the catechetical sessions are not lectures, but opportunities to hear wisdom from great teachers of the Catholic faith from around the world – and a chance to engage with them during the dialogue portion of the session. Encourage them to consider positive, enlightening questions that will benefit their peers in a deeper understanding of the theme or topic at hand. Help pilgrims see themselves as “apprentices” in the Catholic tradition, and that the bishops and catechists of World Youth Day

as spiritual guides accompanying them in the building up of their skills as merciful and compassionate missionary disciples. As a leader yourself, you are also in partnership with the bishops as you continue to unpack the lessons of World Youth Day for the pilgrims in your group throughout and following the international pilgrimage events. Be aware of this dynamic and help pilgrims find spiritual directors and mentors that can journey with them and help them to regularly reflect on the reality of divine mercy in their daily lives.

Another powerful catechetical moment of World Youth Day is the Friday evening Via Crucis (“Way of the Cross”) prayer experience led by the Holy Father. During each World Youth Day gathering, the Stations of the Cross are brought to life through the lens of the host country. For instance, in 2011 in Madrid, carved scenes used in processions for Spanish feast days served as the images on the Way of the Cross, while in 2013 in Rio de Janeiro, a country known for the colorful parades along Copacabana Beach, each station featured actors reenacting the scene in a dramatic and visual art tableaux. Through these unique approaches, young people are able to share their stories in a way that connects to the ultimate story: the paschal journey of Jesus of Nazareth. By allowing each country to contextualize the passion narrative, it allows the Via Crucis event

to become more than a history lesson or a devotional exercise. Because of the intensity of this subject matter, it is important to prepare pilgrims for the Via Crucis by praying and reflecting on it in advance. This can help pilgrims appreciate and enter into what may be a dramatic presentation on pilgrimage. Leaders can draw connections to the global reminder of the Via Crucis that the crosses of injustice, violence, suffering, prejudice, addiction, persecution, and death are realities for many people around the world, including those marginalized in the United States. Pilgrims who view the Stations can be called to act with mercy, justice, and charity like the Blessed Mother, Simon of Cyrene, Veronica, or the Women of Jerusalem in the Passion account. Likewise, leaders can connect the Via Crucis to the pilgrims' personal lives, when they have experienced deep and profound suffering and loss, joining the fragile moments of their lives with the trials and Passion of Christ, ultimately pointing to the power of the Cross through the Lord's Resurrection. In advance of World Youth Day, spending time explaining and accompanying young people through the Stations of the Cross can be very helpful.

Spiritual preparation is not limited to equipping pilgrims for formation and devotion, but also the mundane aspects of World Youth Day. One of those elements is the constant walking

that takes place throughout the journey:

walking to catechesis, meals, central events, churches and sanctuaries, bathrooms...

Walking reminds pilgrims to be in solidarity with those, especially in impoverished areas, who live without transportation and who have to make long journeys for work, food, and shelter. Walking among groups reminds them that any pilgrimage is not done alone, but in the company of fellow travelers who support and encourage them every step of the way. Walking also gives pilgrims time to think, to pray, to sing, and to engage in deeper conversations with others along the road. Leaders can help pilgrims treasure the challenges of walking so much, as well as the regular waiting that occurs on the way to and during World Youth Day (at the airport, on the road, prior to central events, while waiting for meals, and so forth). These moments of walking and waiting, then, can be opportunities for pilgrims to open themselves up to the graces of anticipation, sacrifice, and expectation, similar to the blessings of the seasons of Advent and Lent.

Preparing the pilgrim group in advance of these World Youth Day sites and events will not only make the experiences more bearable, but it will also make them catechetically and spiritually enriching. The leader can turn moments into milestones with good spiritual preparation in the weeks and months leading up to the trip.

**6. Be open to the *Holy Spirit*,
wherever he may be leading you.**

The World Youth Day experience has many “unexpected” moments – from life-changing ones to minor frustrations and surprises. Pilgrimage leaders should anticipate these unexpected events and help pilgrims learn to adapt to sudden changes to the itinerary. Some of the most memorable moments, both positive and negative, cited by past World Youth Day participants have included surprise occasions that were not planned or scripted.

This awareness does not mean abandoning careful or strategic planning on the part of leaders or pilgrims; however, it is important to remember that adaptability can be one of the key values learned in the preparation process. On a theological level, the surprises and sometimes “messiness” of the World Youth Day experience are helpful as we lean on the Holy Spirit to bring some sense of meaning and order to the challenges and even seeming “chaos” that leaders and pilgrims encounter.

These unexpected moments may mean a change in the location or timing of central events. At World Youth Day in 2013, the heavy rainstorms in Rio de Janeiro during the week’s events caused flooding and safety concerns at the anticipated Final Vigil & Mass site,

prompting organizers to move those concluding events to Copacabana Beach. Pilgrim groups needed to adapt to the change in their walking routes on Saturday and Sunday and to the inadequate number of toilet facilities at the new site. Yet, in the end, the event was incredibly memorable, the setting ideal, and the pilgrims largely satisfied with the venue, especially among those whose leaders fostered a culture of adaptation and openness to change. While such drastic changes in the main schedule are rare, it is helpful for groups to consider all the possibilities when on an international pilgrimage. Such adaptability would not be possible without supportive teams and prayerful preparation, realizing that God is ultimately in charge.

Unexpected moments can also include chance encounters with other pilgrims, with catechists and confessors, with strangers on the way and local residents of the host nation, and most importantly, with Christ. Consider walking pilgrims through a parable like the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:29-37) – as the passers-by on the road to Jericho unexpectedly encounter a beaten man along their way. Or the account of the Final Judgment (Mt 25:31-46) when the righteous people cry out to God, “Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, and thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe

you? When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?” (Mt 25:37-38) These chance encounters are critically important in those Scripture stories, and they can be the same for World Youth Day pilgrims. The most life-changing meeting is often the one that is never planned, for God may put into the pilgrim’s path those who could have the greatest impact on their lives. Encourage pilgrims to open themselves up to those moments. Even at well-planned events like the midweek catechetical sessions, a pilgrim may hear something from the bishop or the animating team that stirs his or her soul in new and unexpected ways. Again, encourage pilgrims to be open to these new possibilities and insights.

Other unexpected moments include finding meaning and joy in the seemingly frustrating and negative. Because certain aspects of a pilgrimage can be difficult (including extended periods of walking and waiting around, prolonged exposure to sun, heat, or rain, and long lines for the bathrooms or meal stations, as well as cancellations and changes in plans at the last minute), pilgrims can become aggravated and easily upset. Yet with the support of one another and the compassionate guidance of the leader, those moments of frustration can become opportunities for the Lord to enter into the situation, “wipe every tear from their eyes, and there shall be no more

death or mourning, wailing or pain” and “make all things new” (cf. Rev 21:4-5a). Pilgrims can find grace and joy following unexpected detours in plans or accidents, made more meaningful by leaders who help pilgrims to adapt to the circumstances.

On a larger scale, being open to the will of God and being adaptable to wherever the Lord may be calling means discovering new paths upon which to journey *from* World Youth Day. For a great number of pilgrims, this international gathering has changed the course of their lives. Whether from an experience during the central events or because of a chance encounter, pilgrims have continued to share how important World Youth Day has been in discerning God’s call in their life – whatever that call may be. For the past several years, World Youth Day has played an ever-increasing role in the discernment process of newly ordained priests and professed religious sisters and brothers. A number of them have reported that World Youth Day opened them up to a life of service in the Church, or confirmed for them that this was indeed what God was calling them to do. Others meet their future spouses at World Youth Day, affirming their vocation to the married life. Still others sense a call to become more active in the life of their local parish community or diocese, to gain a degree or continuing education in Church ministry, or

to embark on missionary work in their home country or overseas. Whatever it might be, World Youth Day experiences can become an integral part of the vocational discernment process, opening young people up to the possibility that their lives might be headed in a new direction in response to God's call and fueled by such an international gathering.

Pilgrim leaders, then, are encouraged to help youth and young adults in this discernment journey, before, during, and after the events of World Youth Day. Consider collaborating with local priests and religious communities, as well as marriage ministry leaders and other lay ecclesial ministers, to walk with the young people on pilgrimage, to serve as mentors and spiritual directors (especially on any retreats, reflection days, or service projects), and to speak to the pilgrims about their vocation story. During World Youth Day events in Kraków, be aware of opportunities for young people to connect with priests, religious sisters and brothers, lay ministers, and married couples who are part of the events, especially if they had previously expressed interest in those vocational pursuits. After the return home, follow up with any pilgrims who had been discerning those pathways, as well as those who began to express interest because of the inspiration or formation in Kraków. In all of this, be positive and open to those who express

interest and excitement about pursuing any vocation, whether it be the priesthood, consecrated life, or marriage, or about following a call to special form of service or ministry, including lay ministry. On the topic of priesthood alone, the role of the youth and young adult ministry leader is one of the most important factors in the mentorship of those who discern that calling. Encourage and help them walk through their next steps.

World Youth Day is full of unexpected surprises, some frustrating, and others invigorating. Instead of having pilgrims see those moments as failures of planning or unfortunate circumstances, stress how those occasions are ways that the Holy Spirit is moving through the activities of the pilgrimage. On a vacation, when things go differently than expected, there is stress. On an excursion or adventure, the unexpected can be quite dangerous to the traveler. But on a pilgrimage, the sudden turn of events can be seen as opportunities given by God to encourage us to explore new paths and open our hearts to new promptings of the Holy Spirit.

Even as leaders, accepting this reality can be difficult, as having everything go according to plan can eliminate stress and anxiety; however, the Holy Spirit challenges pastoral leaders as much as pilgrims on this international journey.

The questions for pilgrims and for ministry leaders that should result from those unanticipated moments on the trip include:

- Where is God now leading me (or us)?
- Why might God be pointing me (or us) in this new direction?
- What could God be calling me (or us) to do, to be, or to move towards by this sudden turn of events?
- Whom is God pointing me (or us) towards?
- What needs to change within me (or us) to better accept and understand this situation?
- How can I (or we) respond and react in a calm, patient, and mature manner?

These questions apply to both the simple accidents and the life-altering moments that God offers pilgrims and leaders along their journey. Help pilgrims to keep these questions on hand when the situation changes or when a new insight is given to them during the events of World Youth Day.

At any of those times, it is important to remind pilgrims how the Holy Spirit is now in control. When they (and we) accept and love that truth, personally challenging as that might be, amazing things can happen. It is at those moments when the true goal of pilgrimage begins to take shape – transformation and conversion of heart towards God’s will.

7. The end of World Youth Day is only the beginning.

So much effort is put in preparing young pilgrims for traveling to World Youth Day and keeping them safe and focused at the events themselves. This is important. Yet too often, very little is done in the days, weeks, months, and years following the return home to assist the explicit appropriation of the World Youth Day experience. Once the airplane touches down in the United States and the luggage is collected, aside from a reunion event or two, the journey seems to be done. However, the end of the World Youth Day activities is just the beginning, in a sense, of the next part of the pilgrim’s story. World Youth Day is a continuation of a voyage begun at Baptism that, for some, has been steadily growing prior to their international journey, and for others, has been reawakened by the World Youth Day encounters. Before embarking on the international portion of their pilgrimage, though, young people and their leaders should be fully aware of this trajectory of faith.

Consider again the story of the Transfiguration from the Gospel of Luke (9:28-36). Moses and Elijah appear with Christ who “appeared in glory and spoke of his exodus that he was going to accomplish in Jerusalem” (9:31). In the midst of this phenomenal experience, Jesus is looking

beyond that moment towards what was to take place in the coming months and years. In much the same way, the transformative experience of World Youth Day should point outward, not inward. Even when Simon Peter wants to remain on the mountain longer, saying “Master, it is good that we are here; let us make three tents...,” St. Luke reminds us “he did not know what he was saying” (9:33). Similarly, it may be tempting for pilgrims and their leaders to make the mountaintop experience the end goal of the journey, but the Lord calls us to look further on. After they descend from the mountain, Jesus and the three disciples turn their attention towards Jerusalem (9:51). Jesus makes plans to send his followers ahead of him to prepare the way (9:52), empowering seventy-two of them to go “two by two” on a mission to every town and village the Lord was intending to visit (10:1-12). “Go on your way,” Jesus commissions them, adding a cautionary note: “Behold, I am sending you like lambs among wolves” (10:3). For Jesus and the disciples, the glorious moment of the Transfiguration impels toward the mission into the world, the mission of the Cross, of self-giving love poured out for the glory of the Father and the salvation of the world. For World Youth Day pilgrims, the intense experience of the international gathering directs them to mission, to wherever God calls them to next. WYD is not the end. World Youth Day is a catalyst to greatness.

Challenge pilgrims to see their journey to and from Kraków in the same way. Encourage them to reflect on what their “exodus” might be, where their “Jerusalem” could be, and what mission God could be calling them to embark upon when they come down from the “mountaintop” of Kraków. The missionary task does not happen alone. Help pilgrims take some comfort in the fact that they do not need to walk alone after World Youth Day and that the mission they will be given may take a whole lifetime to complete.

Before pilgrims embark on the trip, coordinate some ways that they can offer service and work for justice in their local communities, in order to prepare them for lives of mercy and compassion. Help them to commit to praying regularly, to listening more than speaking, and to grounding their decisions and discernment in God and through the community and teachings of the Church. Give them tools to help them to witness to their faith with others without being preachy or combative. On this last point, connect them with the advice on accompanying their peers (especially those who may not have received the grace of faith) given by Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium*:

...this “art of accompaniment” which teaches us to remove our sandals before the sacred ground of another (cf. Ex. 3:5). The

pace of this accompaniment must be steady and reassuring, reflecting our closeness and our compassionate gaze which also heals, liberates and encourages growth in the Christian life. (169)

Only through such respectful and compassionate listening can we enter on the paths of true growth and awaken a yearning for the Christian ideal: the desire to respond fully to God's love and to bring to fruition what he has sown in our lives. (171)

Unpacking the Holy Father's apostolic exhortation on evangelization is a great first step in teaching young people how to evangelize and share the Gospel with others. As he notes, it will require them to listen more than speak – and to act with reassurance, compassion, healing, and encouragement. In the same light, it will be helpful for young pilgrims – before going to World Youth Day – to better understand the community from which they are being sent (and to which they will return). Taking a serious look at the struggles that their peers and others in their area face every day will help them understand how they can bring that sense of healing and love to those in pain. It is also beneficial for pilgrims to see where the needs may be in their parish or diocese, in their school or workplace, in their families, and in the civic life of their

communities, and how those areas of concern can be addressed or responded to, especially with the energy of young people. Knowing the “mission field” before receiving a commission at World Youth Day gives the pilgrims a frame of reference – so that they can be better prepared when they return home and get into the difficult work of tending the wounds of people, culture, and situations in their local environment.

When pilgrims have an informed eye set on the future, World Youth Day can be even more enriching. When pilgrims see that their ultimate goal is being a missionary disciple in their community, World Youth Day can be the place where they are recharged, refueled, and renewed for that mission work on behalf of those in need. When pilgrims see that true destination is the Kingdom of God, then World Youth Day becomes an exciting encounter that helps them hear God's voice through the wisdom of the Holy Father and the bishops of the world, the company of fellow pilgrims of faith, and the guidance and mentorship of their pilgrimage leader. The end of World Youth Day, then, is only the beginning of something truly incredible when undertaken as an authentic pilgrimage of faith. Helping pilgrims grasp this knowledge and appreciate it can lead to a lifetime of benefits spurred on by a great catalyst experience.

World Youth Day Resource Logistics: Practical Tips for Pilgrimage Leaders

World Youth Day is an event that requires a great deal of logistical planning and coordination, especially on the part of international pilgrim leaders. Even though a trip like this will undoubtedly have unexpected surprises, it is essential to do plenty of research and planning throughout the entire pilgrimage experience (from the initial decision to go, to well after the overseas events have ended), so that a group has both primary and backup plans. Additionally, because information is so readily accessible in the digital age, pilgrim leaders should be at least one or two steps ahead of their pilgrims regarding details and updates on World Youth Day. Regularly checking the official World Youth Day website in the leader's preferred language (www.Kraków2016.com) and the United States' official World Youth Day site (www.wydusa.org), along with the social media accounts of those organizations, will be helpful to stay informed in a timely manner. In addition, it is crucial for pilgrim leaders to be familiar with Poland and Polish culture for World Youth Day in Kraków, and to some extent, the basics of the Polish language. Go to the library or bookstore to find the most up-to-date travel books, as well as any resources on the faith and history of the Polish people. Keep

updated with travel websites, as well as the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in the United States located in Washington, D.C. (<http://www.waszyngton.msz.gov.pl/en/>), the Polish National Tourist Office of North America (www.poland.travel/en-us/), and the official site of the Kraków Convention Bureau (www.kraków.pl/ccb_en/). Regularly checking on the latest news and updates on these sites will familiarize yourself with the culture and any developments in the country in advance of your trip. The information found there could also be helpful in assisting the internationally-bound pilgrims with their own understanding of the culture into which they are going.

If time and finances allow, pilgrim leaders should consider taking a familiarization tour of Kraków in advance of the World Youth Day events, either with a travel company or on their own. Gaining firsthand knowledge of the landscape, accommodations, transportation, food options, and people can potentially eliminate surprises and misconceptions during the trip with the group. If this is not possible, consider arriving in Kraków a few days prior to the official start of World Youth Day to orient yourself to the city and scout the venues of the central events, housing, and catechesis.

WORLD YOUTH DAY SCHEDULE

It is anticipated that the events of World Youth Day 2016 will follow this outline (though subject to change), similar to the general schedule of international World Youth Day gatherings in the past. The most updated information will be found at www.kraków2016.com.

Tuesday July 26, 2016	Wednesday July 27, 2016	Thursday July 28, 2016	Friday July 29, 2016	Saturday July 30, 2016	Sunday July 31, 2016
<i>Morning through Afternoon</i> Pilgrim Arrivals Arrivals to Kraków area; checking in at housing sites around Kraków	<i>Morning</i> Catechesis with Bishops Catechetical Venues/Sites around Kraków	<i>Morning</i> Catechesis with Bishops Catechetical Venues/Sites around Kraków	<i>Morning</i> Catechesis with Bishops Catechetical Venues/Sites around Kraków	<i>Morning through Afternoon</i> Walking Pilgrimages to Evening Vigil from Łagiewniki area to Brzegi (near Wieliczka)	<i>Morning</i> WYD Final Mass and Closing Ceremony with Pope Francis Brzegi/Wieliczka
	<i>Afternoon through Evening</i> Cultural Festival around Kraków	<i>Afternoon</i> Cultural Festival around Kraków	<i>Afternoon</i> Cultural Festival around Kraków		<i>Afternoon through Evening</i> Return Walking Pilgrimages from Final Mass
<i>Evening</i> Opening Mass Cardinal Dziwisz Arch. of Kraków Błonia Park		<i>Evening</i> Papal Welcome Ceremony with Pope Francis Błonia Park	<i>Evening</i> Via Crucis Prayer with Pope Francis Błonia Park	<i>Evening</i> Candlelight Prayer Vigil with Pope Francis Brzegi/Wieliczka	from Brzegi to housing/home; departures from Kraków

The official beginning of the World Youth Day program is the Opening Mass on Tuesday evening (July 26) with the bishop of the hosting diocese (in this case, the Archdiocese of Kraków); however, there may be additional activities that take place prior to the opening ceremonies. In addition, in the week prior to these programs, *Days in the Dioceses* are held

around Poland – to give international pilgrims an opportunity to arrive early and engage in missionary work in service to the people of the host country. The *Days in the Diocese*, while connected to WYD events, are a separate entity with registration handled by the individual Polish dioceses. More details can be found at www.kraków2016.com/en/days-in-dioceses.

Catechetical sites will be assigned to each group that registers for World Youth Day, based on housing location and language preference. Bishops from around the world provide catechesis for the pilgrims, reflecting on the themes of World Youth Day and concluding with a midday Mass. On Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday of the 2016 program, individual groups will be assigned a specific time and starting point to make a pilgrim journey to the Divine Mercy Sanctuary and the St. John Paul II Sanctuary in the Łagiewniki area of Kraków. On the assigned day of that pilgrimage, it is anticipated that the groups traveling to Łagiewniki will not attend the catechetical session for that particular day, even if their assigned time takes place in the afternoon or evening hours. More information about this nuance to the schedule will be shared with group leaders closer to the event.

The Cultural Youth Festival mentioned on the schedule is actually a series of events taking place across the Kraków region including concerts, presentations, exhibits, performances, lectures, prayer and devotional opportunities, charitable activities, networking, and other programs. A printed or online directory of the various Cultural Youth Festival options will be made available to pilgrim groups immediately prior to or during the World Youth Day week.

Pilgrim Packets

As part of the World Youth Day registration, pilgrims should receive WYD credentials, meal tickets (or voucher book), a guidebook featuring times and events, a worship aid for liturgical celebrations, and a backpack (among other items which will be determined by local organizers). The credentials may also serve as the pilgrim's ticket for Kraków transportation (trams and buses) throughout the week. Pilgrim packets will be available at accommodation sites (or another designated location for those who do not choose simple accommodations). These items are essential to the experience, and pilgrim credentials must be worn at all times for admission to World Youth Day events.

Opening Mass

The first official event of World Youth Day 2016 is the Opening Mass on Tuesday evening (July 26) with Cardinal Stanislaus Dziwisz, Metropolitan Archbishop of Kraków. Note that the Holy Father will not be present for this event. This liturgy sets the tone for the week and is the first real taste of WYD for many pilgrims. Expect most of the Mass to be in Polish (although a simultaneous English translation should be available via a local radio station; be sure to encourage pilgrims to bring along a small radio to follow along and stay engaged). The Mass will be held in the open fields of Błonia Park. There will not be any

chairs, so pilgrim groups will need to grab a spot of grass. Use tarps, blankets, or beach mats to mark your spot. Pilgrims can bring a foam kneeling pad for a seat cushion that easily fits in their backpack. Massive television screens will be stationed throughout the venue, so groups do not need to sit close to the stage area. Since other World Youth Day events will be held in Błonia Park throughout the week, be sure to locate the most accessible toilets, first aid stations, and food tents, as well as the best routes in and out of the area.

As the first event of WYD week, this event may be subject to some transportation issues as a massive influx of pilgrims enters the city, many of whom are struggling to learn the transit system. Therefore, be prepared for delays and long lines and allow plenty of time for travel. As the week progresses, the city and the pilgrims make the necessary adjustments, and some of the transit issues calm down the following days.

Catechesis and Lagiewniki Pilgrimage

On Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday morning (July 27, 28, and 29), catechetical sessions are held in the group's language throughout the city. Groups will be assigned to a location near their accommodation site, so that they do not need to travel a far distance to get there. Some sites will be in small churches or schools, while

others are held in larger sports arenas. Each catechetical session will be based on the theme for that day and will begin with warm-up activities for the pilgrims (called “animation”). A bishop who speaks the pilgrims' language will offer a presentation on the themes, and conclude with a Eucharistic liturgy. These sessions are a great opportunity for pilgrims to meet others from around the world who speak their language, hear from a bishop who is passionate about the Gospel (whether from their country or another country of their language preference), and experience the Sacrament of Reconciliation, which may be offered on-site there. These are core formation experiences of World Youth Day – not to be missed. It is also advisable that pilgrim groups go to the catechetical sessions to which they are assigned, rather than searching for sites with particular bishops or animating teams with which they are familiar. The discovery of new insights and meeting new people is part of the WYD experience – and a way to respond with humility to wherever the Holy Spirit leads.

Cultural Festival & Activities

Throughout the week, especially during the afternoons and evenings, dozens of expositions, concerts, dramas, and other faith-based events will be available at many different venues throughout Kraków and in multiple languages. Collectively, these events are referred

to as the “Cultural Youth Festival” and are free to all registered WYD pilgrims.

Leaders will want to take time to look over the Cultural Youth Festival schedule, in advance if possible, and plan on visiting some events throughout the week. This is also a great way for pilgrims to take in more of the local Polish culture, to go deeper in their formation or spiritual growth, and to meet other pilgrims from around the globe at less crowded venues. More information on the specific activities during the Cultural Youth Festival will be available in the official World Youth Day guidebook upon arrival in Kraków.

Afternoons are also a great time for groups to take a much-needed break, allowing pilgrims a chance to rest and refocus their energies with some unstructured time. For example, some leaders find a quiet park for their pilgrims to pray, rest, or converse among themselves. You may also seek out a local restaurant or sidewalk café to taste some of the local food and drink.

These afternoons can also be used for small group discussions or theological reflection, if that is what is best for the group members at that time. Other group members may want to take in the Cultural Festival or use the time to meet international pilgrims. Do what you feel the group needs to do to recharge its batteries.

Papal Welcome Ceremony

On Thursday afternoon (July 28), World Youth Day pilgrims will joyfully welcome Pope Francis to Kraków at the Papal Welcome Ceremony. Included in this event will be a prayer service with the Holy Father and his first remarks to the young pilgrims gathered there. Since this will be held in Błonia Park, the same venue in which the Opening Mass on Tuesday (July 26) was held, leaders will have an idea of what to expect, how to arrive there, and where to sit or stand. It is anticipated that the pope will speak in languages other than English, so be sure to remind pilgrims to bring their radio and headphones so that they can listen to the simultaneous translation.

This event will be very crowded, as it is the first encounter between the Holy Father and the young people, and many people are looking forward to seeing him for the first time. If your group is able to arrive early in Błonia Park, you may have an opportunity to find a space near a fence or roadway where the popemobile will be passing en route to the stage. If you should have this chance, it is important to know that, immediately prior to the pope’s arrival, it will get even more crowded and people may be pushing and shoving their way to get into your area. Encourage pilgrims to be calm and gracious, yet also protective of their belongings as well as those in their immediate group.

Via Crucis (The Way of the Cross)

All World Youth Day participants will take part in praying the Via Crucis (The Way of the Cross) on Friday evening (July 29) on a grand scale in Błonia Park. Be prepared to watch some of the prayer service live and some of it on a video screen, depending on how the local organizers present the stations. Since this event is being held in Błonia Park, leaders will (at this gathering) have a good sense of transportation and location of necessary services in the area. Past experience shows that, while crowded, the crowds for this event are not as heavy as the previous night. However, there is no guarantee, and caution should be exercised (as at the Papal Welcoming Ceremony) regarding space, belongings, and other pilgrims. This event may be carried out in a language other than English, so once again, it is important to bring a radio and headphones. The prayer service for the Via Crucis may be found in the official World Youth Day pilgrim journal or on a mobile application; however, if it is not, pilgrims can use a Stations of the Cross service/devotion they are most accustomed to praying. Since this event concerns the Passion and Death of our Lord, it will have a more sober atmosphere than the Welcoming Ceremony or the Cultural Festival activities during the day. Encourage the pilgrims to maintain a respectful, reverent spirit so that they can have a meaningful and deep prayer experience during this prayer service.

Saturday Vigil Walk

On Saturday (July 30), the World Youth Day pilgrims will make their way to the “Campus Misericordiae” vigil site at Brzegi (due east of the Kraków city center) by public transportation, on foot, or a combination of both. Be sure to have a clear plan for getting to the vigil site (see below for what to bring on pilgrimage walk). Some groups try to claim spots as close to the main stage as possible, while others try to camp closer to water and toilet facilities. If the local organizers have designated a particular section for you and your group for the vigil, please respect those directions and stay in your assigned area. If not, groups will risk overcrowding one another, and this may result in uncomfortable sleeping arrangements or potential conflict with other groups of pilgrims.

Remember that pilgrims only need to take with them what they need for Saturday and Sunday (July 30 and 31). Either en route to or as they enter the vigil site, pilgrims will receive a packet of food for the next 24 hours. Although it will be enough food for that period of time, it may all be in one bag or package. Be sure pilgrims take stock of all food items contained in the packet, as these have been planned in advance for them. Encourage rationing and make sure pilgrims do not eat all of their food on Saturday (it happens more than you might expect).

The walk to Brzegi may be long and take place over uneven, waterlogged, or dirty terrain. Tell pilgrims to be aware of their surroundings as they make the journey, especially if they are passing through residential areas. It is essential to be respectful of local residents' property, and encourage other groups to do the same.

Pilgrims should drink plenty of water, wear comfortable shoes, and, if any problems should arise during the pilgrimage walk, locate World Youth Day volunteers for assistance.

Saturday Night Prayer Vigil

Although pilgrims may be tired and tempted to go to bed early on Saturday night (July 30), they should not miss the solemn and beautiful Candlelight Prayer Vigil on Saturday night with Pope Francis. This is one of the most special aspects of the entire World Youth Day experience. Encourage young people to sing along with other pilgrims and, at the same time, to embrace the silence that will be part of the prayer vigil. In previous World Youth Days, one of the most remarkable moments was when the entire field of young people was moved to silence as the Holy Father led quiet adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. During this and the other parts of the candlelight vigil, pilgrims should maintain a respectful tone so that they and others have the opportunity to have a meaningful prayer experience open to encountering the Lord. When the prayer service

is finished, most pilgrims remain in the field and sleep under the stars. However, be prepared in the case of rain or flooding by sleeping in and around (or under) protective covering. Pilgrims may only get a few hours of sleep that night, but they should try their best to rest. After a long walking pilgrimage and an intense prayer vigil, they will need energy for the final Mass the following day and the walk back to the starting point.

Sunday Closing Mass with the Pope

On Sunday morning (July 31), Pope Francis will preside at the World Youth Day Closing Mass at the "Campus Misericordiae" in Brzegi.

Although only registered WYD pilgrims are invited to the previous night's vigil service, all of the Catholic faithful in the host country are welcome to attend the Closing Mass. So do not be surprised if that little bit of open space near your group is filled by the time Mass begins. In fact, rather than looking at the new people as interlopers, encourage pilgrims to treat them as guests and invite them into their area with hospitality and graciousness. The pope is anticipated to arrive a short while before the scheduled start time of Mass, so that he can tour the open field in his popemobile. As with previous encounters with the pope, the roadways and fences will be especially crowded in advance of his drive through the area. Be cautious of your group's equipment and

belongings so that they are not trampled or ruined by crowds of people running to get a better view of the Holy Father.

The Closing Mass, like the previous World Youth Day events, will most likely take place in a language other than English; so again, a radio and headphones are helpful for pilgrims to have here as well. Pilgrims should pack them in their bags before heading out to Brzegi.

Since this is the celebration of the Eucharist – even though all pilgrims will be worshipping while standing next to a sleeping bag or their backpack and despite the fact that they may be watching the pope on a massive television screen in a field of millions of people – it is essential that they maintain a respectful and reverent attitude throughout the liturgy. The Mass truly is the summit of the World Youth Day mountaintop experience – and as such, pilgrims should be open to the Lord’s voice like the disciples during the Transfiguration.

At the conclusion of the Mass, the Holy Father traditionally announces the location of the next World Youth Day. Most people will depart immediately following the final song of the liturgy; however, if your group is not in a hurry, they are welcome to stay and eat their provided lunch in a leisurely fashion. By the time the group is done eating, the crowds may have

thinned out a little bit, and pilgrims should (though not guaranteed) have an easier time beginning the pilgrimage back to the housing sites by walking or using public transportation.

PACKING ESSENTIALS

Clothing and Shoes

If your group will be staying the traditional length of World Youth Day (from Tuesday, July 26, through Sunday, July 31, 2016), they will want to bring clothing for around five or six days and plan on wearing some items twice rather than doing laundry. If your particular trip is longer (with additional tours or travel days), advise pilgrims to bring only enough clothing to cover those days.

There is no need for any formal clothing at World Youth Day, so pilgrims can focus on functional, casual apparel. Some religious shrines and churches enforce a modest dress code requiring that shoulders and knees be covered, so pilgrims should be prepared for that in their packing. In general, wear modest clothing that is respectful, as World Youth Day is a truly Christian activity. Remind pilgrims that they represent their local parish, diocese, or movement, and the United States of America at this international gathering, and as such, they will want to present an image to others that

would make their church and country proud to have them as their representatives.

Pilgrims will also walk a great deal during World Youth Day, so travelers should bring sturdy, well broken-in shoes along with foot care or blister kit available at the local drug store. The weather in Poland in the summer ranges from hot to humid and damp and rainy (and sometimes within the same day); because of that, it is good for leaders and pilgrims to check the forecast so that they can bring appropriate clothing for the weather conditions they will encounter that week. Pilgrims should wear layers because of the fluctuating weather patterns; this will be especially important for the Saturday walking pilgrimage and overnight vigil experience (possibly going from a warm day to a cool night, returning to warm conditions on Sunday morning).

Another suggestion would be to pack extra thin socks (which can take almost no space and wash/dry quickly); wearing two at once can also limit the formation of blisters, as socks rub together instead of the skin.

The WYD Backpack vs. Your Own

Pilgrims are encouraged to bring their own backpacks or one from the WYDUSA store (though these are smaller than other options), rather than rely on the backpacks that Kraków

will provide on-site. While receiving the official WYD backpack is a great perk that comes with registration (and will be a wonderful memento of the journey), the quality, size, and design of the pack may not fit your pilgrims' needs (and it is difficult to assess these factors until arriving in Poland). In addition, there will be hundreds of thousands of identical Kraków 2016 backpacks in use during the World Youth Day events, so the likelihood of it being picked up by someone else is very high. It is better for pilgrims to bring it home as a souvenir. The unique WYDUSA or local bags will also make it easy to identify the group in large crowds.

Some features that pilgrims ought to look for in a good backpack for this trip include: sturdiness to withstand the demands of a pilgrimage; pockets for water bottles that they can reach when the pack is on the back; lots of attachment points for tying things on or hooking in carabineers; a good size to be able to carry supplies (food, blankets, devotional books, radio, etc.) for the week; and a sternum strap so the shoulder straps don't slip off. A belt strap can be a huge help in transferring the weight of the full backpack from the shoulders to the hips. Most pilgrims can also use their own backpack as their carry-on for overseas flights. They can also purchase, in advance, one of the official WYDUSA slingback backpacks available at www.wydusa.org.

Packing for the Flights

Many airlines and travel companies will limit passengers to one checked bag and one carry-on. Pilgrims should be aware of these regulations when preparing for this trip. They will want to pack anything they may need on the flights in their carry-on (e.g., passport, medication, toothbrush and travel tube of toothpaste, and a change of clothing in case of delayed or lost baggage). They will also want to carry on any cash they are bringing and any fragile items such as electronics. The airline may provide a small pillow and blanket, but pilgrims may want to bring their own earplugs and eye mask if they would like to get extra rest on the overseas journey. Be sure to check the TSA website at <http://www.tsa.gov/traveler-information> for a full list of what is allowed to bring inside airport security.

Packing for the Week

During the World Youth Day activities throughout the week, pilgrims should plan on taking whatever they will need for the entire day in their backpack when they leave in the morning. Some things they might want in their backpack include: rosary, jacket or sweater, rain jacket or umbrella, flashlight, snacks, hand sanitizer, travel toilet paper, a pilgrim journal, a small radio (and headphones) for simultaneous language translation at major events, hat, sunglasses, sunscreen, camera, foot care kit, cell

phone, and a cell phone pocket charger. They will also want a water bottle that they can refill throughout the day. Some people bring expensive water bottles or backpacks with water bladders, while others just use an empty plastic soda bottle because it's sturdy and easy to replace. If your or your group is doing some touring using a tour bus, travelers can usually leave the backpack on the bus when the group is touring. Note that some museums and World Youth Day venues will require backpacks to be either run through a metal detector or left outside of security.

Poland also works on a different electrical system than the United States. The voltage is 220-240 volts, whereas the typical current in the U.S. and Canada is 110-120 volts. In addition, the electrical sockets in Poland use the European standard types (called Europlug and Schuko). This will mean that pilgrims from the United States will need to pack an adapter to adjust both the voltage and socket type for their appliances (laptops, phone chargers, shavers, and other small electronics).

Packing for the Vigil Walk & Mass

For this two-day experience of "roughing it," pilgrims will only want to bring what they need for Saturday and Sunday. They can bring overnight gear and leave the rest at their housing site. In addition to the gear they

normally carry during WYD week, pilgrims will need to carry: a sleeping bag or blanket (or a lightweight sleeping bag liner), a ground cloth (a shower curtain from a dollar store works great), a sleeping pad (a cheap pool mattress can do the job), flashlight (or portable light), change of clothes, toothbrush and toothpaste, and prescription drugs. This is where having some attachment points on your backpack can be valuable. Climbing carabineers are especially handy for attaching things to the backpack.

Language

Thankfully, most Poles speak some English (though do not rely on this completely). In a country like Poland, you won't need to speak fluent Polish to get by. However, knowing a few phrases in Polish such as "Yes" (Tak), "No" (Nie), "Where is the bathroom?" (Gdzie jest toaleta?), and "Thank You" (dziękuję) will go a long way to respecting the local culture. Pilgrims may consider packing a small phrase book of Polish and English words.

In addition, it is good for pilgrims to know some basic phrases in the central World Youth Day languages (Spanish, French, English, German, and Italian) spoken by the majority of pilgrims at this event. In advance of the trip overseas, leaders can work with groups to learn the basic phrases and words in Polish and the official World Youth Day languages.

Getting Around

Transportation is a significant issue at World Youth Day since the event puts a major strain on the transportation infrastructure. Expect possible delays and breakdowns in the system. It is anticipated that they World Youth Day credentials will serve as a public transportation pass that will allow pilgrims unlimited travel on the buses, trams and trains in and near Kraków. If your group has not experienced public transportation before, consider traveling with your pilgrims to a major metropolitan city in the United States to practice the art of riding public transit. Every pilgrim should be able to read the public transportation route map of Kraków, know how to plan a trip on a public system, and know how transfer to another line. Please note that the numbers of the tramlines in Kraków change from time to time, so a map with the route numbers may be different from what pilgrims actually encounter when they arrive in Poland. Group leaders should check on these public transportation details immediately upon arriving in Poland.

Expect to walk over five to ten miles each day as part of the World Youth Day experience, depending on the location of your group's accommodations and catechetical sessions in relation to the central events and center city. Walking is a key component to WYD and as such, will be a frequent occurrence there.

If your group has any mobility-impaired pilgrims, but sure to take appropriate precautions and note their situation when registering, checking in, or arriving at World Youth Day events with the on-site volunteers.

Medical Issues

According to the Center for Disease Control (<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/poland>), pilgrims do not need any special vaccines other than routine vaccines for travel to Poland. Pilgrims should check with their doctors to ensure they are healthy to travel and with their health insurance to see what coverage, if any, they receive when traveling abroad. World Youth Day may provide some limited health insurance as part of the pilgrim package (though this is not guaranteed or known at this time). Travelers will want to review that and their personal insurance, and consider if they (or their family) will need any supplemental health insurance.

In addition, pilgrims should have a copy of their current prescriptions with them in case the traveler's medication gets lost or needs to be refilled unexpectedly. Having a copy of these prescriptions can also be helpful in case medical attention is needed overseas – and the medical professionals need to know what medications are regularly taken by the patient.

Money and Currency Exchange

While most European countries have standardized their currency on the Euro (€), Poland has not made that conversion and uses the Polish złoty (zł or PLN). Just like 100 cents makes a U.S. dollar, 100 groszy equals 1 złoty. The exchange rate between the U.S. dollar (\$) and the Polish złoty (zł) can be very beneficial for travelers from the United States. Once one knows the current exchange rates (as they fluctuate regularly), it is helpful (when looking at prices) to find a system to calculate what that would be in U.S. currency. For instance, if the exchange rate is \$1.00 = 3 zł, then travelers can easily divide the amount they see by one-third to have a better sense of price.

Encourage pilgrims to obtain some złoty prior to their departure to Poland – which they can get from their bank, currency exchange, or from an ATM or currency exchange kiosk as soon as pilgrims arrive at the airport or train station in Poland. Since złoty is not as common a currency as the Euro, it may take extra time to receive this money in the United States. Allow extra time for this type of transaction.

Currency exchanges are convenient, but pilgrims may get a better deal at an ATM or major bank. Credit cards are handy in Europe, but not all are accepted and many street

vendors or small shops only take Polish cash. Also, most banks charge a foreign transaction fee for each transaction, so pilgrims should be sure to check with their bank before making the trip. Pilgrims will want to inform their bank of their intended credit card use overseas before they depart so that the bank does not think the card has been stolen. Pilgrims should not bother with travelers' checks as the widespread acceptance of credit cards and debit cards as well as the availability ATMs have made them somewhat obsolete. On the return to the United States, pilgrims should note that banks and currency exchanges may charge another fee to convert Polish złoty back into U.S. currency.

Food and Meals

Americans should have no trouble with traditional Polish food items that often revolve around meat, potatoes, and bread. Of course, many American restaurant chains are also available in Europe if pilgrims need something more familiar. During World Youth Day, registered participants who choose the meal option will receive food vouchers as part of their pilgrim registration. If leaders have a travel company putting the pilgrimage together, be sure to review which meals are provided and which meals will be on you own. If your group is using simple housing, there will be breakfast available (with basic breakfast items) near your housing or catechetical sites. Some groups who

stay at hotels may have a breakfast option as part of their hotel package.

For lunch and dinner, the vouchers can be used at local restaurants or food tents nearby World Youth Day activities such as catechetical sessions, central events, and cultural festival locations. Some meals will be available for a single ticket while others will require two. Be aware that different countries have various customs related to which meal is largest (in Poland, for instance, the biggest meal of the day is lunch, while in the United States, the largest meal is usually dinner). The flexible voucher system allows for this flexibility. Further instructions on how to use the voucher system in Kraków will be included with the pilgrim packet upon arrival or on the WYD website.

Emergencies and Protection

If you or any members of your group are in an emergency situation in Poland, you can dial 112 (this is the equivalent to our 911). Many Poles speak English and will assist you. There are also many World Youth Day volunteers (who speak multiple languages) around Kraków (and the surrounding areas) who can provide assistance or point you in the right direction for more information. In addition, you can get non-emergency assistance from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and the U.S. Consulate, both of which will have

offices set up in Kraków convenient for the pilgrims from the United States.

Be aware of safe environment procedures in case pilgrims are inappropriately approached, who to contact, and what to do. It is best to consult with the child and youth protection office of your local diocese for more information, especially if you are traveling with minors or vulnerable adults. Within large crowds, it is essential that you have an exit strategy and a pre-determined place where pilgrims can gather if they are separated or need to retreat from the event quickly. Being aware of these tools and staying vigilant will be helpful not only for your pilgrims, but the safety and security of all international World Youth Day participants.

It should also be noted that there may be cultural differences in “personal space.” In the United States, people generally have a broad understanding of their personal space; however, in other parts of the world, such space is much more limited. Help prepare pilgrims for such distinctions and that, in large crowds at an international gathering like World Youth Day, their personal space may be invaded. As long as these encounters are not dangerous or lead to abuse of any kind, pilgrims should be prepared for seemingly uncomfortable moments.

Cell Phones Overseas

Many Americans travel to Europe and come home to massive cell phone bills because they did not manage their data usage during the trip. If pilgrims are bringing their cell phone overseas, they should contact their mobile phone service provider to understand the financial implications of using their phones and data plans overseas. Not all cell phones work overseas but some carriers will loan travelers a phone for their trip. Some people bring an unlocked phone overseas and purchase a local SIM card once they arrive. Note that whether using a cell phone or an international calling card, all pilgrims should call, text, or email an emergency contact at home within 24 hours of arriving in Europe.

They may also want to consider using digital services like Skype (if Wi-Fi capabilities are available your housing site in Kraków), as this cuts down on the costs of communication overseas. However, even with this in mind, pilgrims should be aware that this trip is a pilgrimage, not a vacation, and as such, mobile devices should be used only for the purposes of this trip (for instance, using a WYD mobile application, reading Scripture or devotional prayers online, etc.) or for emergency contacts and/or checking in via Skype or phone calls.

Especially when walking around Kraków (or on the journey to Poland), please encourage the group to put their cell phones away and pay attention their surrounding areas. Leaders should pay attention to pilgrims who may stop to use their phones for taking pictures or using it for emergency calls. It is important to stay vigilant with mobile devices while traveling.

Time Change

Kraków and Poland (and most of the European continent, except for the British Isles) is six hours ahead of the Eastern Time Zone, nine hours ahead of the Pacific Time Zone, and eleven hours ahead of the Hawaii-Aleutian Time Zone during the summer months, when World Youth Day will take place.

For example, 6:00 P.M. in Kraków is 12:00 P.M. in New York, 11:00 A.M. in Chicago, 10:00 A.M. in Denver, 9:00 A.M. in Los Angeles, 8:00 A.M. in Alaska, and 7:00 A.M. in Hawaii. There is also more common usage of the 24-hour clock in Europe (for instance, 18:00 instead of 6:00 P.M.); consequently, pilgrims should be aware of how to quickly and accurately tell time using this system.

On the first day of arrival in Europe, pilgrims (and leaders) should give themselves a few hours of rest to catch up on the sleep lost on the flight over; it may take a few days to adjust

to the new schedule (and be aware that, even if group members' eyes have adjusted, their bodily functions may not; groups should plan their bathroom breaks accordingly when traveling). Prior to the return trip, leaders should advise their pilgrims that they may also need some time to recover and re-adjust their sleeping patterns and cycles to a normal routine upon re-entry into the United States.

Passports and International Travel

Traveling internationally involves additional challenges for World Youth Day pilgrims. The U.S. Department of State has a website (<http://travel.state.gov/content/visas/english/general/americans-traveling-abroad.html>) to assist United States citizens traveling abroad and specific information for traveling to Poland including important travel warnings and alerts (<http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/country/poland.html>).

United States citizens will need a valid U.S. passport to travel to Poland and that it has *at least six months of validity* left for international travel (which means passports used for the trip to Kraków should be valid through February 1, 2017 or later).

International travelers are encouraged to register their trip with the United States State Department Safe Traveler Enrollment Program

(<https://step.state.gov/step/>). No visa is required for U.S. citizens traveling into the European Union (EU), of which Poland is part.

Non-U.S. citizens with proper documentation should check with their consulate to determine if a visa will be required for this trip.

Unfortunately, undocumented immigrants living in the United States will be denied re-entry into the U.S., so they should avoid international travel and events like World Youth Day overseas. Those pilgrims with other circumstances (DREAM, DACA, etc.) should consult with the U.S. State Department and the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (www.uscis.gov) prior to booking travel to the international World Youth Day events.

Pilgrims should photocopy their passport prior to travel – and leave one at home, one at the diocesan, parish, or group leader’s office in the United States, and one for the group leaders to have with them in Kraków during the trip itself. Some banks may require travelers to show their passport when they convert currencies.

Should pilgrims lose their passport or in the case of an emergency, they must immediately seek out the U.S. Consulate General, located at ul. Stolarska 9, 31-043 Kraków, Poland (very near the Dominican Holy Trinity Basilica in the center city area). Before going to Kraków, be

sure to check out the consulate website at www.krakow.usconsulate.gov. The consulate’s telephone number is +48-12-424-5100.

Officials from the U.S. Consulate will also be available at various English-language World Youth Day sites throughout the week.

In addition to knowing the location and directions to the U.S. Consulate General offices in Kraków, leaders should also know the location and details of the Embassy of the United States within Poland, located in the country’s capital, Warsaw: Aleje Ujazdowskie 29/31, 00-540 Warsaw, Poland. The telephone number for the U.S. Embassy in Poland is +48-22-504-2000. The website for the U.S. Embassy is <http://poland.usembassy.gov>.

Trading at World Youth Day

World Youth Day is about coming together as a global faith community. One way of celebrating that form of cultural exchange is by trading items with others. This is especially fun if pilgrims bring or make items to trade such as prayer cards, crosses, buttons, stickers, decorated clothespins, bandanas, hats, shirts, and so forth. These items can represent their local parish, diocese, or movement, their local community, state, or country. Some people give away their items, but most try to “bargain” an exchange for items that other pilgrims want to trade. There’s no official time or location to

engage in these interactions, as it is done informally throughout the week, en route to events, on the pilgrimage walk, or while waiting for programs to begin. Remember that trading is optional, so pilgrims should not worry if they do not have anything to trade.

If they would like to trade things that represent the Roman Catholic experience in the United States, the WYDUSA office (www.wydusa.org) provides some items for purchase in advance of World Youth Day. These include WYDUSA clothing, backpacks, blankets, water bottles, prayer cards, and posters. In addition, the USCCB Store has other items specific to the Catholic experience in the United States. International pilgrims may enjoy receiving these unique Catholic items from the USA.

Three Opportunities to Never Pass Up

Above all, there are three practical things that leaders and their pilgrim groups should never pass up on a World Youth Day pilgrimage:

1. Opportunities to refill the water bottle,
2. Opportunities to eat a meal, and
3. Opportunities to use the toilet (even when pilgrims don't think they need to go).

One cannot be sure when the next opportunity will come for any of these, so groups should take advantage of them when they arise.

In general, preparing for the World Youth Day trip can be a challenge – and as you can see, there are many things that pilgrims and leaders should be aware of before traveling abroad. Nonetheless, if pilgrims are properly prepared in these areas, they should have a good and safe trip – and be able to focus on the incredible spiritual and missionary experiences that the World Youth Day pilgrimage has to offer them.

BASIC STRATEGIES FOR LEADERS

With all the factors involved, leading a World Youth Day pilgrimage group is a great experience but it can be a bit intimidating when you realize the awesome responsibility on your shoulders. The role of a good pilgrimage leader is to assist his or her pilgrims in their total pilgrimage experience and their continued formation as a disciple of Christ.

Besides putting the pilgrimage together, the group leader is constantly concerned about the present and the ever-changing details of the future. You are a spiritual companion, tour guide, meeting planner, and risk manager all rolled up into one. This leader's manual includes both the spiritual and practical elements that go into pilgrimage leadership. Balancing them is challenge, but one that Lord has trusted you to handle and overcome. What follows are some basic logistical tips for World

Youth Day group leaders. Some are common sense and others are drawn from experience and past mistakes and best practices.

Tour Companies or Do-It-Yourself

Pulling together a World Youth Day pilgrimage is a major undertaking and the amount of work can be daunting. A number of larger pilgrim groups in the United States (such as dioceses, apostolic movements, or clusters of parishes) hire a specialized travel company to take care of these details. One advantage of hiring a travel company is that, when things go wrong, a travel company is there to assist you.

Before securing a particular organization or travel company, it is important to check that company's references and financial state.

There is also great flexibility in developing a World Youth Day pilgrimage on your own. The overall costs may be less and there are possibly more flexible options for transportation, accommodations, and mobility (since you will only need to secure a few spots rather than for a large contingent). While travel companies will try to meet individual needs, pulling the trip together on your own ensures that those needs are met exactly as you and your pilgrims want. Additionally, you can set your own deadlines for payments – and receive information firsthand from World Youth Day organizers.

Pilgrim Age Concerns

Although the title of this event is World *Youth* Day, most of the world treats the international gathering as a “young adult” pilgrimage and many of the international participants in Kraków will be in their twenties. The standard recommended age for this pilgrimage is 16 to 35. However, the World Youth Day committee has allowed pilgrims as young as 13 years of age to register and most pilgrims, regardless of age, have had very positive experiences at World Youth Days in the past.

However, it should be noted that an increasing number of U.S. dioceses attending World Youth Day have moved to a policy of bringing young adult pilgrims only (that is, age 18 or older) to cut down on the overseas travel risks and liability, or because they believe the WYD message and experience are more suited to the young adult faith experience. Minors (17 and under) require closer supervision and assistance compared to young adults. Nonetheless, if your diocese, parish, or apostolic movement has decided to bring minors to World Youth Day, be sure to get written parental permission and any necessary documentation necessary for transporting minors abroad without their parents or guardians. It will also be good to help these teens through the movements of the World Youth Day event, especially if they seem geared toward a young adult audience.

Alternative events for young people ages 17 and under include the National Catholic Youth Conference (www.ncyc.info), the annual Steubenville Youth Conferences (<http://steubenvilleconferences.com/youth/>), the Notre Dame Vision Youth Conferences ([https://vision.nd.edu/Welcome to Notre Dame Vision/Youth Conference.html](https://vision.nd.edu/Welcome%20to%20Notre%20Dame%20Vision/Youth%20Conference.html)) and national and local youth conferences hosted by parishes, dioceses, and apostolic movements.

In addition, local communities can develop stateside World Youth Day activities aimed directly at high school youth – to give these young people an opportunity to witness and experience World Youth Day-like events in their local diocese or parish community. A list of the stateside gatherings can be found at the WYDUSA official website, www.wydusa.org.

Research, Research, Research

As mentioned before, leaders should do extensive research on the pilgrimage travel, stops, lodging site(s) and the venues. The Internet and sites like Google Maps have made this much easier than in the past. As you do your research, save pertinent websites and downloadable information.

If you are working with a travel company, be in frequent contact with them as trip details firm up. Some group leaders put together a

notebook for their staff members and volunteers that includes all of the important details for each day of the pilgrimage as well as pilgrim rosters, rooming lists, and medical information for each pilgrim (be sure to keep confidentiality of medical information). This is a great way for the your staff and volunteer leaders to be on the same page and have critical information shared in case you or another team member is unavailable. For example, on flight days the notebook might contain a timeline for the day, prayers for departing pilgrims, flight numbers, reservation numbers, aircraft layouts, and airport terminal maps – basically anything that could help you during that phase of the pilgrimage. On a day during the World Youth Day week, the notebook might contain the official schedule, accommodation info, festival options, a map, prayers, lists of the pilgrims, and daily team tasks and contact information.

Leadership Team

Principle pilgrim leaders should consider bringing at least one other person on the pilgrimage (a volunteer leader, a fellow staff member, etc.) to act as co-leader or “staff,” and assist them by covering all or a portion of their travel costs. Many travel companies will build in complimentary registrations for leaders so that pilgrims all pay a fair share of the costs for the necessary leadership on the trip. Co-leaders and staff will need to be one of the first ones to rise

each morning and among the last to sleep; they may miss some World Youth Day central events and moments (if, for instance, they may be asked to take a pilgrim to the hospital or assist with the set-up for future activities).

There are several tasks that you, as the principle leader, can delegate to co-leaders and staff so that you can keep your mind on the big picture, such as attendance counts, tip distribution, rooming lists, and other administrative tasks.

Lodging and Accommodations

World Youth Day has a wide range of lodging options from school floors and parish halls to hostels and hotels. As part of your World Youth Day registration package, the organizers provide simple housing options.

In this, pilgrims will need to bring their own sleeping bag (and sleeping pad); a simple breakfast is also included. Shower facilities may be limited in these conditions. As an inexpensive option, though, the basic pilgrim accommodation route matches the pilgrimage spirit of keeping things simple. Its downside is that leaders do not have much say in where they are assigned and, depending on the distance from the central events, pilgrims may not be able to return to their housing sites midday. Another option is a hotel that could be more expensive but may also offer additional amenities and services.

Border Crossings and Passports

Traveling internationally involves additional challenges for World Youth Day pilgrims. As noted before, U.S. citizens will need a valid passport to travel to Poland. The U.S. State Department recommends that passports have at least six months of validity left for international travel (they should be valid through February 1, 2017, or later). Non-U.S. citizens with proper documentation should check with their consulate to determine if a visa will be required. Unfortunately, undocumented immigrants living in America will be denied reentry into the U.S. so they should avoid international travel and WYD.

Passports may not be needed after entering Europe; however it is a good idea for each pilgrim to carry a photocopy of their passport and for their group leaders to have copies as well. If your group is staying at a hotel, you may want to collect your pilgrims' passports and lock them up in their hotel safe for safekeeping. Another safety tip is to leave one or more copies of the pilgrims' passports with family members or with parish/diocesan leaders who remain stateside in the United States.

Alcohol in Poland

The drinking age in Poland is 18 years of age. A pilgrimage is not the proper place for minors to begin experimenting with alcohol, so group

leaders taking participants ages 20 and younger should enforce the U.S. drinking age. Be sure to explain this in advance of the pilgrimage to avoid misunderstandings and consider adding it to your pilgrim code of conduct. Even for those over the U.S. drinking age of 21, World Youth Day is not a time for excessive or public drinking. Rather, the WYD pilgrimage is a time for modesty and restraint so that the true celebration can focus on community and the common faith of the universal Church gathered with the Holy Father.

Constantly Looking Ahead

Throughout the World Youth Day events, the group leader continues to gather information necessary for their group. Be prepared for last minute schedule or venue changes. Look ahead in the schedule and plan out what your group will attend, how you will transit there, and when to depart. The obvious travel route may not be the best route for your group especially when tens of thousands of pilgrims have the same idea. Your group will appreciate the time you put into giving them solid “intel” information. At some points, you may need to leave the group so that you can scout the next route, site, or options for upcoming central or local events. Having a good co-leader and team who can manage the group in your absence (if needed) will be helpful at times like this.

How Not to Lose Pilgrims

Just as Jesus sent the disciples out two-by-two, pilgrims (no matter if they are youth or young adults) should operate on the “buddy system” where every pilgrim has at least one (if not more) companions throughout the week.

When traveling with a group by bus or rail, everyone should know two things: where the group is getting off and what to do if they miss the stop. Leaders need to have a solid game plan and make sure everyone knows that plan, as well as the contingency plan. Cell phones have made this process easier, but not everyone in your group will have a mobile device that works in Poland.

Trying to stay together when walking is difficult when large crowds are involved. Some groups will use a rally object like a flag, banner, cross, or simply an umbrella that the group leader (or someone who always stands next to the group leader) holds high. Pilgrims should stay as close to the rally object as possible. If they are separated, each pilgrim should know what to do to reconnect with the group. One idea to create a collapsible flagpole is to purchase a three-section aluminum tent pole at a camping store (the kind that uses a bungee cord to keep the three sections connected) and connect the flag to it with zip-ties or similar connectors.

Be sure to discuss with your pilgrims that they will need to be “politely assertive” as they walk at World Youth Day. Pilgrims from the U.S. tend to err on the side of politeness when walking around. While you should never be rude at WYD, most Americans may need to be more assertive in their walking style or risk getting separated from the group. Ask them to walk with confidence and purpose as they stay together with the group. Note that some groups try to stay together by linking arms and making a long human chain. This is dangerous and *not* recommended as individuals lose control over their own steps and endanger others by blocking possible escape routes. Pilgrims should also work in groups when going to the restrooms or going off on their own to pray, visit sites, or meet other pilgrims. These measures are important both for youth, young adults, and older World Youth Day participants to ensure group unity.

Marking Your Territory

It can be difficult to “mark your territory” when your group finds a place to sit for one of the central events (opening Mass, papal welcome, Via Crucis, etc.). Consider using tarps, blankets, or beach mats to save your spots, especially after everyone scatters once you’ve found a spot. This will deter other groups from walking through your area or stealing space/items.

Check Your Wings

One idea for pilgrim check-in is an exercise called “check your wings.” Before departing for the trip (during the Year of Preparation), gather the entire group together in a large circle facing in. It does not matter what order everyone is standing; only that they are in a contiguous circle. Ask everyone to memorize who is on their immediate left and immediate right as they stand in the circle at that moment. These two people become their “wings” for the entire pilgrimage experience. From that moment on, regardless of who is near them or on their left or right at any given time, when one of the leaders asks the group to “check your wings,” each person should do a visual check of the area to see if their two “wings” are present. If both are there, the pilgrims are silent. They only speak up if they are missing a “wing.” Since the system has built-in redundancy, there should be *two* people speaking up that they are missing someone; different from the buddy system, this ensures two people are keeping an eye on any given person in the group.

This system is not perfect. If several people are missing, the leaders may not know who or how many. However, leaders will know that some people are missing at that time, and they can move from there. Most of the time, this exercise works efficiently and quickly, and all pilgrims are held accountable to each other.

This exercise is especially important for transition moments during the pilgrimage: for instance, when getting on and off public transit, upon arrival and departure from the target location, at the beginning and end of each day, and at meal times.

Fundraising

There's no question that World Youth Day is a financial challenge for many pilgrims. Some dioceses offer financial assistance to pilgrims, some parishes will do group fundraisers, and some individuals will do individual fundraisers or ask for financial assistance from friends and family. Raising funds as a group can build community and get local communities engaged and invested in the pilgrimage. However, it should always be kept in mind that the need to raise money should not interfere with or take away from the spiritual preparation of pilgrims.

Nonetheless, there are multitudes of fundraisers ranging from product and bake sales to special fundraising events to direct donations (now even more convenient with online and social media donation pages). A plethora of fundraising ideas are available on the Internet by simply searching “ministry fundraising” or reaching out to other World Youth Day organizers across the country. Try to avoid fundraisers that involve a lot of work for small financial gain. While there is no perfect

fundraising option (and no surefire way to secure the funding), the key is to integrate the spiritual and communal goals of the pilgrimage into whatever fundraising activity is developed for the group. A popular idea to get the local community more involved and engaged with the World Youth Day pilgrimage is for parishioners, families, or peers to “adopt” Kraków-bound pilgrims and assist them both financially and spiritually. These adopters, as well as the pilgrims, pray for each other during the preparation, celebration, and follow-up of World Youth Day. Some communities and parishes can host gatherings before and after the trip so that the pilgrims and the adopters can come together to connect, pray, and share their mutual experiences.

While it would be wonderful if the costs for World Youth Day were not so high, there are a number of ways to overcome the financial challenges involved with overseas travel: Choosing the WYD simple accommodation packages, price checking your airfares, and using the meal voucher system of World Youth Day (instead of purchasing meals on-site) are all ways to keep costs down, so that fundraising is not so extensive. Even with these options, encouraging and planning memorable stateside World Youth Day celebrations can be a great way to help youth and young adults who cannot afford the costs of traveling to Kraków.

Information Relay

Good leadership requires good information and good communications. Group leaders are strongly encouraged to carry a mobile device in order to check daily for the latest World Youth Day updates and messages (either from the World Youth Day organizers in Kraków or through WYDUSA). Organizers may use apps or social media to relay any changes or alerts to group leaders spread across Poland during the World Youth Day events. In addition, a mobile phone is a great way to communicate with one's pilgrims either through voice or text options (international rates may apply). Some travel companies may provide one or more mobile phones to their groups.

Inevitably, group leaders will need to make daily announcements to their pilgrims about gathering times, transportation plans, meal options, changes to the schedule, and so forth. Some groups are small enough to talk to the group at any convenient time, while larger groups may need to gather together at a set time once per day to ensure thorough communication. If the group is too large to gather in one space daily, consider meeting with co-leaders or small group leaders (or designates) once or twice per day, and have them relay the information to the pilgrims. If the group is staying in one site, consider posting any updates on a board or sign in a clear, visible location.

The Sacrifice of Joining a Group

Remind pilgrims that they sacrifice some of their individual choices when they join a group, whether that group is five people, fifty people, or five hundred people. They will need to trust their leader and follow the instructions, even when they might rather do something else. This is even more essential to young adult pilgrims who feel their adult age entitles them to independence while traveling overseas. You may need to remind them that you and other leaders are always looking out for what is best for the group. In addition, make sure your pilgrims, especially young adults, know in advance that they have agreed to a set trip itinerary and any deviations from that must be discussed in advance of the pilgrimage. This should deter pilgrims from going rogue or trying to change their travel reservations during your pilgrimage. On a spiritual level, this reminder can be integrated with a lesson on the value of community – and that the work of the collective group outweighs the preferences of the individual. In American society, which prizes individuality, this can be a challenging lesson – but one that will prove very helpful at an international gathering like World Youth Day (and hopefully in future circumstances beyond WYD when the pilgrims are building their families and working in teams at the office, among other situations where such communal lessons are invaluable).

Pilgrim Blessings

Despite all the aforementioned logistical hurdles of organizing the international trip, keeping a prayerful spirit is essential to the true success of the pilgrimage. It is important to emphasize this constantly, so that participants do not reduce their group leaders to event-organizers. Instead, the leaders are pastoral guides accompanying pilgrims on their journey.

The book, *Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers* from the USCCB, has some excellent prayer services already written out for the departure, journey, and return of pilgrims. If no priest or deacon is available, a layperson may lead many of the prayers contained in the book including the “Blessing of Travelers.” Go online to the www.usccb.org website to order one or more copies for your group. Consider using the prayers in this book with your entire group or encourage parishes or dioceses to use them to send off their pilgrims. The book is portable enough for leaders (or several leaders) to carry with them to Kraków, as well as throughout the preparation process. When pilgrims see their leaders using books like these on a regular basis, it may inspire them to secure the book for themselves in the weeks and months following their return home from World Youth Day.

Additional prayers and guides can also be found on the WYDUSA page, www.wydusa.org.

Group Leader Supplies

In addition to your own personal supplies, group leaders should consider bringing extra gear, even if it means checking an extra bag. Group leaders may want to bring some basic office supplies, some inexpensive radios, duct tape and blue tape, tarps and beach mats, sticky notes, pens, a compass, zip-ties, small clear bags, and garbage bags. You may also consider purchasing some of these items in Kraków instead of carrying them overseas. Having these extra items might be valuable with large groups when faced with unexpected circumstances, bad weather, or the need to hold team meetings during World Youth Day.

It is also important for leaders to bring some items (devotionals, books, prayer cards, a cross, rosary, journal, music, etc.) for their own spiritual well being. Leading a group can be very exhausting, especially at World Youth Day. It will be important for group leaders to have tools that will assist them in prayer, reflection, and rejuvenation – however that is done for the individual leader. Caring for others cannot be done without also caring for ones’ self.

In the end, the World Youth Day experience offers pilgrims **and leaders** the opportunity of a lifetime – but one that requires much preparation and planning because of all the moving parts of this great pilgrimage journey.

Coming Down From the Mountain: Accompanying Pilgrims on the Return Home

Nourishing the pilgrim's experience of discipleship after World Youth Day requires intentionality and forward thinking. It is not just a day or an experience that occurs on a particular date or in a specific place, but a step along an ongoing pilgrimage of faith. Without effort on the leader's part, World Youth Day becomes an isolated experience.

This pilgrimage is meant to strengthen the faith of pilgrims in the same manner the Transfiguration was a special event in which God allowed certain disciples to have a unique spiritual experience that was meant to bolster their faith for the challenges they would later endure. In much the same manner, World Youth Day pilgrims have a mountaintop experience when they make their way to the host country – and there, are transformed, inspired, and given direction for their lives. In the Scriptures, the disciples expressed a strong desire to stay in that holy space on Mount Tabor, saying, “Rabbi, it is good that we are here! Let us make three tents” (Mk. 9:5). It is also tempting to want the experiences and memories of World Youth Day to last forever.

Yet Jesus reminded Peter, James, and John – and he reminds pilgrim travelers today – that

they cannot live on mountaintop experiences alone. The exhilaration of the World Youth Day celebration can quickly fizzle, no matter how fantastic it was in Poland. Yet arriving in the U.S. does not mean everything is finished; rather, leaving Kraków is just the beginning of the next phase in the pilgrim's journey: the incredible journey down the mountain.

Pilgrims may very well want to relive those special and memorable Kraków moments, yet the continuous journey of faith is one that includes climbing up the mountain, arriving and being transformed at the peak, and going back down the mountain, in order to fully live out that transformative experience. The complete pilgrimage package is a round-trip journey.

In Luke's account of the Transfiguration, when Jesus speaks with Moses and Elijah, he “spoke of his exodus that he was going to accomplish in Jerusalem” (9:31) – pointing towards the work that still needed to be accomplished after this moment of glory. World Youth Day, in much the same way, will give pilgrims direction and formation for the tasks they lay ahead of them upon their return home and throughout their lifetime. Yet in order to put into motion those dreams and hopes begun in Kraków, the

pilgrim must come down from the mountain – not depressed for leaving a wondrous place, but excited for the great work that is yet to be accomplished with the grace of God. Helping pilgrims to see World Youth Day as a stop along the way instead of the end goal will go a long way to a more fully-realized pilgrimage experience and a permanent, not temporary, encounter with God.

It is also critical that leaders accompany and support their pilgrims through the melancholy that can sometimes possibly result from leaving such a transformative moment.

Helping World Youth Day participants move from excitement to sadness to excitement again, upon returning home, is not always easy; however, it is something that leaders are called to do as part of their journey with their pilgrim travelers. The pilgrim leader's work, then, is not over when everyone is back in their home; the pilgrim leader's work also continues on.

Go Make Disciples with Mercy

One of the ways to assist pilgrims in the return experience is to introduce them to the understanding that they are missionaries, and with the 2016 World Youth Day theme in mind, they are to be missionaries with a merciful and compassionate heart for the world and society into which they are being sent.

In Pope Francis' final homily on Copacabana Beach in Rio de Janeiro for the Closing Mass of the last international World Youth Day, he sent forth those pilgrims with a mission reflecting on the biblical passage and theme of the 2013 encounter, "Go and make disciples of all nations" (Mt. 28:19):

With these words, Jesus is speaking to each one of us, saying: "It was wonderful to take part in World Youth Day, to live the faith together with young people from the four corners of the earth, but now you must go, now you must pass on this experience to others." Jesus is calling you to be a disciple with a mission!

The end of World Youth Day was only the beginning. The Holy Father, like Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI before him, had called the pilgrims to embrace their mission. He also explained that the beatitudes were the action plan for their lives: "Look, read the Beatitudes: that will do you good!" Like Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati, whom John Paul II had declared "the man of the beatitudes," the young adults of World Youth Day were to be simple and pure in heart; to become peacemakers, hungering for righteousness and justice; to comfort those who mourn and who are poor in spirit; and to be strong in the face of persecution. In particular, with the 2016 WYD

theme (“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.” Mt 5:7), pilgrims are doubly called to be loving and merciful missionaries, compassionate to those they encounter upon their return home and, by so doing, hopefully attracting them to faith in Christ and the community of the Church.

Furthermore, a mission grounded in mercy seeks those who feel far from God’s embrace or the affection of others: the disenfranchised, the poor and marginalized by society, the rejected, and the lost.

Pope Francis spoke on this mission of mercy during one of his general audiences in Saint Peter’s Square in Rome (on September 9, 2014), saying, “In the Gospel, the essential thing is mercy... A Christian must necessarily be merciful, because this is the center of the Gospel.” In his message for World Youth Day 2016, the Holy Father expanded on these words for young pilgrims, saying:

I always like to link the Gospel Beatitudes with Matthew 25, where Jesus presents us with the works of mercy and tells us that we will be judged on them.

I ask you, then, to rediscover the corporal works of mercy: to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked,

welcome the stranger, assist the sick, visit the imprisoned and bury the dead.

Nor should we overlook the spiritual works of mercy: to counsel the doubtful, teach the ignorant, admonish sinners, comfort the sorrowful, forgive offences, patiently bear with troublesome people and pray to God for the living and the dead.

As you can see, mercy does not just imply being a “good person” nor is it mere sentimentality. It is the measure of our authenticity as disciples of Jesus, and of our credibility as Christians in today’s world.

Mercy, then, is the blueprint for the journey coming down the mountain, where pilgrims will meet those most in need of that grace and will be challenged to offer that to them.

In Luke’s Gospel, after the experience of the Transfiguration “on the next day, when they came down from the mountain, a large crowd met him” (9:37), and Jesus and the disciples were immediately confronted with opportunities for offering mercy to those who needed it most (cf. Lk 9:38-43). As soon as they return home, perhaps on the travels en route, pilgrims will be given a chance to put into action the blueprint of mercy with those they encounter along the way. When they do this, pilgrims become “missionary disciples” who are

called to be active in fulfilling the primary mission of the Church: to make disciples of all nations by sharing the Good News of the Gospel – to continuously be formed in Christ, while at the same time, putting that formation into action. As missionary disciples, World Youth Day “alumni” are now sent into their own backyards, bringing love, mercy, and the compassion of Christ to their neighbors, families, friends, and strangers encountered in their daily activities, including the poor and disenfranchised in their own midst. Pope Francis says, “Every Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus: we no longer say that we are ‘disciples’ and ‘missionaries,’ but rather that we are always ‘missionary disciples.’” (EG 120). Acceptance of the call to missionary discipleship is the path to holiness as conveyed by Saint John Paul II in his encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*, which is devoted to the subject of missionary activity and his wish for the Church to renew her missionary commitment. “The universal call to holiness is closely united with the call to mission” (no. 90), and the way to holiness is through a merciful heart, open to God and the world.

Assisting Pilgrims Through This Call

Pilgrims come to World Youth Day for a variety of reasons, but very few come looking for more work to do on the opposite side of

their trip overseas. Yet the call to become missionary disciples with a heart of mercy is exactly what the Holy Father and the Church is hoping for all participants to engage in after the last note is sung on the last song at the Closing Mass for World Youth Day 2016.

How can leaders encourage their pilgrims to become missionaries? How can they bring excitement to their leave-taking when nostalgia and memory making may be their first priorities in the days after Kraków?

The first step is to introduce them to this concept of ongoing missionary mercy and action during the preparation process, so that this call is not a surprise at the conclusion of their travels. Remind them of the roundtrip nature of a pilgrimage like this (that their starting point is also their eventual destination)/ and that the true test of how effective World Youth Day is will be not in how exciting it was to see the Holy Father or have an illuminating experience of praise and prayer in Poland, but in what happens in the weeks and months after they return home from World Youth Day.

Another step is to actively and intentionally talk about their mission in the last days of the pilgrims’ time in Kraków. Some may be frustrated that this wonderful moment of their lives has ended, and it is important for the

leader to bring comfort and encouragement. Convey to them that the best way to revisit their mountaintop experience is to share the core message of mercy and compassion with those who were unable to travel to Kraków – yet not in a “you should have been there” manner, but a truly invitational measure that allows others to contribute and participate in the ongoing pilgrimage of faith.

Many pilgrims come back eager to share their story. Storytelling is a key part of the initial days back home, and it should be done in a way that invites others to consider and share in the fruits of the journey. Even though people may want to hear the stories and experiences of Kraków pilgrims, there may be some jealousy among those who were not able to travel overseas. So such storytelling should be done in the context of dialogue, so that international pilgrims can hear the stories and experiences of stateside pilgrims, family members, and others who remained home.

Leaders can continue to follow up with their pilgrims on several occasions throughout the return process – perhaps a week or several weeks afterwards, and again on different occasions throughout the coming year. At the same time, the leader should be conscious of the cliquishness of the World Youth Day participants by encouraging pilgrims to look

outward from their pilgrim group, always inviting others to share in their ongoing journey of faith – including friends and family, fellow colleagues and students, and those who do not share their Catholic faith.

Rather than separating themselves from those who do not share their passion for God or the exciting experience of World Youth Day, it is important for pilgrims to deepen their friendships and connections with their peers, friends, and family. It can be tempting for pilgrims to say phrases like “you should have been there” or try to proselytize those who are uncertain about faith, but such actions should be avoided. Rather, Pope Francis challenges a missionary disciple to accompany his or her peers with a listening heart and a gentle spirit rather than to push their agenda on others.

Recall that he says, the “art of accompaniment ... teaches us to remove our sandals before the sacred ground of the other. The pace of this accompaniment must be steady and reassuring, reflecting our closeness and our compassionate gaze which also heals, liberates, and encourages growth in the Christian life” (EG, no. 169).

Leaders should teach and model this steadiness in their own work with the pilgrims, helping the young people in their group to act in the same manner to those who might think or act differently than they do.

It is also important for leaders to help the international pilgrims engage with stateside pilgrims – those fellow youth and young adults who journeyed locally, digitally, or in their home parish or diocese for the World Youth Day experiences. Helping them to understand that their overseas experiences were not superior to those of stateside pilgrims, but simply different, is very important. Encourage them to be humble in their approach and to unite with stateside pilgrims who shares a different aspect of the WYD experience. In all matters, the group leader should readily keep in touch with their pilgrims, asking them how they are doing and giving them strength and guidance whenever necessary. Following up, asking good questions, and praying for and with the pilgrims in the months and years after World Youth Day will remind pilgrims that their journey does not end at the airport on the way home. It continues throughout their lives.

Ideas to help pilgrims return home:

- Encourage pilgrims to write thank you notes to his or her youth or young adult minister, pastor, parents and grandparents, benefactors, and anyone who had a hand in providing the opportunity for them to attend World Youth Day.
- Encourage pilgrims to write an article for their parish, campus, or diocesan website,

blog, social media page, newsletter, newspaper, or magazine.

- Encourage pilgrims to speak to people in their parish, campus, or diocese after one of the Masses or during any large gathering within their local community.
- Help pilgrims to direct their renewed energy and enthusiasm into projects or activities in their local parish, campus, diocese, or community, especially beyond the work of their particular youth or young adult ministry program.
- Point pilgrims towards a spiritual director or mentor, who can help them process their ongoing spiritual development.
- Encourage international pilgrims to collaborate with stateside pilgrims in the weeks and months following the summer season; this collaboration can include a jointly-planned event or reunion experience, as well as shared service, formation, and social events.

Questions leaders can ask pilgrims upon returning home from World Youth Day:

- What was the high point of your World Youth Day experience? Why?
- What was the most frustrating part of your World Youth Day experience? Why?
- What is one thing you learned about being a missionary disciple and an agent of mercy?

- What was your favorite prayer experience from World Youth Day?
- What was the most impactful thing about traveling to Kraków and Poland?
- Where did you find peace or illumination while on your pilgrimage?
- What did the Holy Father (or a bishop, catechist, or leader) say or do that really impacted or challenged you?
- Who are the memorable people you met at World Youth Day? Where are they from?
- How was this pilgrimage experience different from the vacations or excursions you may have taken in the past?
- How do you plan to keep in touch with the new people you met at World Youth Day?
- Who do you wish you could have brought with you on this pilgrimage?
- How will you bring that person into the experience now that you are back home?
- How will you engage stateside pilgrims, as well as friends and family at home, in your continuing pilgrimage of faith?
- How has your relationship with God changed or been enhanced by this pilgrimage experience?
- What three action steps or resolutions are you taking after World Youth Day?
- How will you be more merciful in your words, actions, and faith life from here on?

- How do you imagine you can make a difference in your community now? In your parish, diocese, movement, or nationally?
- Where do you feel God is calling you to go next? What are your future plans?

Coming down the mountain can be sobering, but also exciting – for God has great things in store for the pilgrims of World Youth Day. For the past thirty years, World Youth Day alumni have done amazing things in the Church and in the world, inspired and motivated by the experiences of this international pilgrimage.

Many of those who have had such an impact were assisted by leaders who accompanied and guided them along the way, especially in the critical time after the events of those respective gatherings. Jesus accompanied Peter, James, and John down Mount Tabor, continuing to journey with them to Jerusalem, supporting them when they struggled and doubted, and encouraging them to go forth to preach the Gospel. The pilgrim leader follows in Jesus' footsteps as they, too, continue to journey with their pilgrims and equip them with the tools they will need to turn their transformative experience in Kraków into a mission whereby they will help to transform their world and the hearts of others towards Christ and the Gospel, by the Lord's good grace.

APPENDIX: Sample Post-WYD Group Sharing Sessions

Group sharing sessions and activities allow pilgrims to share their faith with others and to grow together in community. They are extremely helpful in assisting pilgrims integrate their personal and communal World Youth Day experiences into their daily lives. Prayer, shared experiences, and continual explorations of faith are also helpful when the WYD pilgrims face future challenges and even possible loneliness, frustration, or stagnation in their faith lives and among their peers.

SAMPLE GATHERING #1

Downward Then Upward:

Continuing the Mission

NOTE TO LEADER: *You will need sticky notes, pens, and a Bible for the activities of this gathering.*

Opening Activity

Sticky Note Transfiguration Mountain

Action: Hand each participant multiple sticky notes. Ask them to write, on the sticky notes memories from the start of their personal faith and life journey. This may be their earliest memory of First Communion or Confirmation, their first overnight retreat, or a childhood memory of their family or parish community. Then have them also write on each sticky note a different memory from the most recent

World Youth Day. Have them put these notes in the shape of a mountain (triangle) on the wall, placing the most memorable, mountaintop moments at the peak.

Explain: “Upward then downward, upward then downward.” One can describe their lives as an up-and-down experience, often feeling like a rollercoaster ride. Although there are tough moments and valleys of darkness, God always points the way back up the mountain. Just as Jesus accompanied the disciples through the valleys of Galilee, he also journeyed with them to the mountains to deliver the Sermon on the Mount, to reveal his Transfiguration, and to Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives. To map out these mountains in our own lives, we will remember the moments that have shaped us along the way.

Opening Prayer

God our Father, we gather today
as we are on this lifelong journey
that you have called us to through our Baptism.

Help us to hear your word,
be docile to the Holy Spirit,
and realize in ourselves
why you have called us by name
and have been with us throughout our lives.

Give us strength, wisdom and humility
to respond to the great needs
of our brothers and sisters around the world.
We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Scripture

Read the Transfiguration Story:
either Mt 17:1-9, Mk 9:2-10, or Lk 9:28-37

Catechesis and Reflection

When the disciples witnessed the Transfiguration of Jesus, they were so amazed and wanted to stay with Him on the mountain. They were so in awe of what they had seen and experienced that they didn't want to leave. As we reflect back on our experience from World Youth Day, some of us want to stay on that mountaintop. After experiencing so many beautiful aspects of the Catholic faith these past several weeks, some felt as Peter, James, and John did when they were in the presence of the glorified Christ at the top of the mountain, accompanied by Moses and Elijah, the pillars of their Jewish faith; but that wondrous moment was only a portion of their experience. Jesus called his followers not only to be disciples, but missionaries – to bring what they had learned and experienced and share that with others. Now Jesus calls *us* to do the same – to not only believe and understand the faith, but to share the Gospel with others. Coming back down from the mountain comes with some

excitement and gratitude for the transformation that occurred, but it can also be difficult as pilgrims re-enter the routine of daily life. Even after the Resurrection, the Apostles had this same challenge after watching Jesus ascend to heaven. The angels asked them: “Why are you standing there looking at the sky?” We must make sure to ask ourselves that if we remain “standing here” looking at pictures and videos and talking about the great moments of World Youth Day in Kraków, without ever going out and answering the call to evangelize. By this point in the journey, you have opened your heart to experience Christ. Many of you have gone far beyond your comfort zones and experienced frustrations and roadblocks throughout this pilgrimage. Yet the Lord still asks more of you. Now as you walk down the mountain and re-enter everyday life, you are challenged to keep Christ present in your life, while also sharing the joy of the Gospel with others along the way, accompanying one another on your mutual journeys.

Small Group Activity

Share with one another different mountaintop experiences of World Youth Day, and how those might inspire you (or where they might be pointing you) as you “come down from the mountain.” What evangelization steps and merciful acts are you considering doing as a response to the events of World Youth Day?

Large Group Activity

After this World Youth Day experience, what do you feel God is asking of you now? How will you go out and share this Good News with those around you? What message from the last few weeks – maybe from the Pope, other Bishops, or catechetical session – most affected you? Where are you being sent? What is the next mountain God is placing before you, that you must climb next? And what might await you at the top of that summit?

Closing Exercise

Action: Have each pilgrim write down several things they will do next in their faith lives on sticky notes. When they have written at least five to ten things, invite them to post those notes in a descending pattern on the right “slope” of their triangle mountains.

Explain: Your journey is not complete. World Youth Day was just a moment of transformation along the way. Write down a different action step that you will be taking now that you have been inspired and motivated by World Youth Day. They can be simple action steps or grand dreams. Put a different goal on a sticky note. Then take those notes and place them in a descending pattern along the right “slope” of your sticky note mountain. This represents the continued journey you are taking

as you “come down from the mountain” and look ahead to the next great adventure of faith.

Closing Prayer:

Mary, our Mother, Queen of the Apostles, we are mindful of the role you play in the evangelization of souls.

We ask you to guide us and help us to fulfill this mission of evangelization and mercy which your Son has given to his Church and which falls to us.

Mary, you are the Help of Christians, and we entrust ourselves to you in the work of carrying the Gospel ever deeper into the hearts and lives of all those around us. Amen.

Hail Mary, full of grace...

Our Lady, Queen of Apostles, **pray for us.**

St. James the Apostle, patron of pilgrim travelers, **pray for us.**

St. Therese of Lisieux, patroness of the missions, **pray for us.**

St. Kateri Tekakwitha, young witness from our native land, **pray for us.**

Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati, patron of young adults, **pray for us.**

St. John Paul II, patron of World Youth Day, **pray for us.**

SAMPLE GATHERING #2

What Just Happened?

Unpacking World Youth Day

Opening Prayer

Lord, thank you for the opportunity to gather with the Universal Church at World Youth Day.

Open our hearts and minds to discover what was said, what was done, and how your grace appeared during that sacred moment in our lives. In your Name, we pray. Amen.

Reflecting on the Moments

Explain: We will take time to look back on what just happened at World Youth Day – not in some nostalgic way, but through the lens of prayer and discernment at where God is calling us now. First, we will reflect in the large group on the major events of World Youth Day 2016.

Action: If you are able, show video or photos of, or bring up three major moments from your group’s particular pilgrimage journey (this can include something that happened during the preparation experience; traveling to Kraków; one of the main events of World Youth Day such as the opening ceremonies, the papal welcome, the U.S. gathering, the Via Crucis, the catechesis, the pilgrimage to the Divine Mercy Sanctuary, the walk to the vigil, the overnight

experience, the Final Mass; or it can include something on the way home or an activity that happened within your specific group before, during, or after World Youth Day). In the large group, take time to reflect on and discuss the following questions about those experiences:

- What was most exciting about that moment?
- What were you thinking then about that experience?
- What was most challenging about that moment?
- Now having come back home, what do you think of this moment?
- Why was this moment so moving or special for you, for others?
- What does this moment say about your current situation and circumstances?

After discussing each of the three moments, take a few moments of silent prayer to thank God for the experience the pilgrims were able to share together with the universal Church.

Reflecting on the Words

Explain: Now we would like to have you reflect on the words spoken at World Youth Day – by the Holy Father, by the bishops, and by others. Take time by yourself for this particular reflection.

Action: Bring to the gathering written copies of Pope Francis' homilies and presentations at World Youth Day, as well as some of the talks given by bishops, catechists, or other speakers there. Give each pilgrim a different talk (though there may be some duplicates depending on the size of your group; ideally it would be good to have enough so everyone has a unique text to reflect upon), or if audio or video files are available online, allow pilgrims to bring earphones to listen to them on their mobile device or laptop. Alternatively, the entire group can listen or watch one of the pope's talks together; however, it is best if each pilgrim has their own time to review, read, and/or listen. Allow approximately 45 minutes of quiet time where each pilgrim can sit with his or her particular text in a comfortable space. Encourage them to take notes, underline lines that strike them, and pray over the words they read or listen to. After this time, bring them together for small group discussions.

Small Group Discussion

NOTE TO LEADER: *Gather the group back together and assemble into small groups, which will use the following questions to guide their conversation:*

- What struck you about the passage you read? What was distinct about it?
- Why do you feel those words were said at World Youth Day?

- What was the pope/speaker responding to?
- Do you remember hearing these words in Kraków? (and if so: What was your initial reaction to these words then? How has it changed reading it again?)
- How might this passage intersect with your own life, situations, concerns, or calling?
- Why do you think God wanted you to read through this particular talk?

Reflecting on the Encounters

Explain: Finally, we would like to have you reflect on the encounters of World Youth Day. On the journey, you encountered many people as well as the Lord. We will take some time to reflect on these encounter experiences.

Action: Allow each person some room to write, but be able to hear in the large group. When they are settled, ask the following questions for them to reflect upon and write down any thoughts on an individual basis:

- Who were the people you met during the **preparation process**? Think about fellow pilgrims. Think about the people who assisted you in preparation, fundraising, and prayerful support. Think about parish, diocesan, campus, or local leaders. Think about family and friends with whom you discussed your preparation process.

- Who were the people you met **on the road to Kraków**? Think about the people in the airport, the fellow travelers to Poland, the people who greeted you upon your arrival, and even the ones you passed along without giving them much notice along the way.
- Who were the people you met **at the events of World Youth Day**? Think about the World Youth Day pilgrims from other countries and other parts of your own country. Think about the bishops, catechists, leaders, artists, and presenters you met during the events. Think about the security, business owners, local residents, and passers-by you saw there.
- Who were the people you met **coming home from Kraków**? Think again about those in the airport, on the road, your family and friends you saw upon your arrival back in the United States, and those whom you shared details of your trip in the days and weeks since your return home.

Explain: Consider all these different encounters. Remember their faces, their voices, and their words. Pray for them. Now consider the following questions, and again, reflect on these on your own:

- Where did you encounter God in those meetings and along the way?

- What moment, what words, what person paved the way to this encounter?
- When did that moment of God's grace come to you? When did you notice it?
- How did it feel? What did you think? What did you do when you noticed God there?
- What might the Lord be asking of you in these encounters and with these people?

Explain: Take a moment for silent prayer, to thank God for giving you such an experience of faith. Thank the Lord for the moments, for the words, and for the people you met – and for having a chance to encounter him on the mountaintop of World Youth Day.

Small Group Discussion

NOTE TO LEADER: *Gather the group back together and assemble into small groups, which will use the following questions to guide their conversation:*

Action: Get into small groups of 3 to 5 persons each for some additional questions for consideration; encourage pilgrims to be open if they are comfortable doing so.

Explain: Being grateful for the moments, words, and people of this pilgrimage which you just spent some personal time reflecting on, discuss the following questions, as you feel comfortable doing so, with one another:

- How might these people, moments, and elements of the World Youth Day experience impact your life after the event has finished?
- Are these moments, words, and people pointing you towards something that needs to be adjusted in your life – or are they affirming a direction, decision, or inkling that you have had up until now?

Activity: Four Things

Action: Once the small groups have finished, come together in the large group and ask every pilgrim to write down four things on four sheets of paper:

1. What is one way that the exciting moments of the international World Youth Day can help me to find the grace, grandeur, or transformative experience of God in simple things and in situations of everyday life beyond World Youth Day?
2. What word, passage, or speech from World Youth Day will carry me through the coming days, weeks, months, or years beyond World Youth Day?
3. Who in my everyday life do I need to be more intentional about meeting and knowing more about, just as I met and

learned about other wonderful people on the way to and from Kraków?

4. What one action will I do to keep the moments, words, and encounters of World Youth Day alive in my life beyond the World Youth Day experience itself?

Action: Encourage pilgrims to keep these four pages in their journals, Bibles, or in a special place where they can refer back to these notes and resolutions during the weeks, months, and years ahead of them. Encourage them also to take these pages into prayer with them.

Closing Prayer

Good and gracious God,
thank you for the moments of grace,
the words of wisdom,
and the wonderful people
you put along our paths
to and from World Youth Day.

May they continue to guide us
in all that we do, in all that we think,
and in all that we are,
now and for the rest of our lives. Amen.

Our Father, who art in heaven...

Hail Mary, full of grace...

Glory be to the Father...

SAMPLE GATHERING #3

The Joy of the Call:

Sent Out As Disciples and Missionaries

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus, we want to bring
your love, your peace, your justice, your life
to all who are in need of it.

Enkindle our hearts, take away our fears,
give us strength, enlighten our paths,
and guide us onward. Amen.

Addressing Fears

Explain: The time for the international component of World Youth Day 2016 has officially come to a close, but the pilgrimage continues. Your duty as missionary disciples is never ending, but is now strengthened due to the World Youth Day experience. Your particular mission of mercy may be carried out alone or with others, yet each person is called in their own way to become a missionary disciple. It is natural for there to be some concern.

- Do you have any fear or hesitation about this call? What are they, and why?
- What calls to you the most?
- What do you fear the most?

Action: Take time for discussion at the beginning of this discussion to address those fears and concerns on the mission ahead.

Reflection on Pope Francis' Words

Explain: The following are excerpts from Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*. In this work, he shares what it means to be a missionary disciple. We will take some time to reflect on these passages in light of our international World Youth Day experience.

Each Christian and every community must discern the path that the Lord points out, but all of us are asked to obey his call to go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the “peripheries” in need of the light of the Gospel. (EG, no. 20)

Each individual Christian ... is called to be an instrument of God for the liberation and promotion of the poor, and for enabling them to be fully a part of society. (EG, no. 187)

We should not think, however, that the Gospel message must always be communicated by fixed formulations learned by heart or by specific words which express an absolutely invariable content. (EG, no. 129)

God's word, listened to and celebrated, above all in the Eucharist, nourishes and inwardly strengthens Christians, enabling them to offer an authentic witness to the Gospel in daily life. (EG 174)

Individual Reflection

Having heard the Holy Father's words, consider the following questions for personal and individual reflection:

- After this World Youth Day experience, how are God's Word and his missionary call fresh for you?
- What remains constant for you?
- What has changed?
- How are you responding or now planning to respond to his invitation to missionary discipleship?
- What frightens you about the Holy Father's words in *Evangelii Gaudium*?
- What excites you about his challenge?

Small Groups: Missionary Courage

Explain: In pairs (or trios), read the following Gospel passage aloud (Mt 10:26-33).

Therefore do not be afraid of them. Nothing is concealed that will not be revealed, nor secret that will not be known. What I say to you in the darkness, speak in the light; what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops. And do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather, be afraid of the one who can destroy both soul and body in Gehenna. Are not two sparrows sold for a

small coin? Yet not one of them falls to the ground without your Father's knowledge. Even all the hairs of your head are counted. So do not be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows. Everyone who acknowledges me before others I will acknowledge before my heavenly Father. But whoever denies me before others, I will deny before my heavenly Father.

Explain: Reflect on and discuss the following:

- How does this passage relate to your experiences at World Youth Day and your call to go out as missionary disciples?
- Do you find comfort in these words or do they frighten you?
- Realizing that Jesus was a realist and did not mislead the disciples with false promises, we know that being his missionary disciple is not trouble-free. What challenges and difficulties do you imagine you will face after WYD as a missionary disciple?
- Jesus says to "speak in the light" what you have received. How do you plan to do that, realizing your own circumstances and environment in which you live and work?
- The devotion of Divine Mercy, with its origins in Poland, encourages us to trust in Jesus. How trusting are you of God to take care of you when you are challenged for your faith or your mercy towards others?

Missionary Direction

Explain: Saint John Paul II wrote the encyclical letter *Redemptoris Missio*, subtitled, *On the permanent validity of the Church's missionary mandate*. Published on December 7, 1990, the encyclical is devoted to the subject of “the urgency of missionary activity” (RM, no. 1) and in it, he wished “to invite the Church to renew her missionary commitment” (RM, no. 2).

Listen to his words:

The fact that there is a diversity of activities *in the Church's one mission* is not intrinsic to that mission, but arises from the variety of circumstances in which that mission is carried out. Looking at today's world from the viewpoint of evangelization, we can distinguish three situations.

First, there is the situation which the Church's missionary activity addresses: peoples, groups, and socio-cultural contexts in which Christ and His Gospel are not known, or which lack Christian communities sufficiently mature to be able to incarnate the faith in their own environment and proclaim it to other groups. This is mission *ad gentes* in the proper sense of the term.

Secondly, there are Christian communities with adequate and solid ecclesial structures.

They are fervent in their faith and in Christian living. They bear witness to the Gospel in their surroundings and have a sense of commitment to the universal mission. In these communities the Church carries out her activity and pastoral care.

Thirdly, there is an intermediate situation, particularly in countries with ancient Christian roots, and occasionally in the younger Churches as well, where entire groups of the baptized have lost a living sense of the faith, or even no longer consider themselves members of the Church, and live a life far removed from Christ and his Gospel. In this case what is needed is a “new evangelization” or a “re-evangelization.” (RM33).

Explain: Here are three situations in which we are called to be missionaries: (1) the places that do not know God; (2) the places where faith is strong and celebrated; and (3) the places in need of a reawakening of the practice of the faith. Take a moment for personal, quiet reflection to ask yourself: to which of these three situations is your heart calling you? Each of us is called to share the Gospel and to offer mercy to others – so which setting are you feeling God calling you towards? Reflect for a few moments on why might be calling you there and what lies ahead for you.

Small Group Discussion

Action: Divide into small groups, with no more than five persons. Reflect on the following and then share as a small group.

- After your time of personal reflection, what do you think is your calling?
- Do you feel you need to continue to discern how God wants you to share in the mission of Christ at this point in your life?
- What characteristics in you are indicators of your particular vocation?
- Do you have any doubts or confusion about your calling?

Large Group Final Reflection

NOTE TO LEADER: *Reconvene the group together for a final large group gathering.*

Explain: The phrase “missionary discipleship” means that, even if (after the formation and inspiration of World Youth Day) we feel unprepared for the missionary mandate God has called us to (in other words, we are still disciples sitting at the feet of Jesus), we are challenged to still step out on mission – to serve the least, to advocate for justice and goodness, to courageously act with mercy and compassion, to share our story and our witness of faith, to teach and accompany others, and to

build up the Kingdom of God in our local communities and among our peers.

If we were to wait until we were “fully prepared” for this mission, we might never go beyond our comfort zone. Instead, while still disciples learning about our faith and the Gospel, we are called to take initiative and become missionaries in a postmodern world – whether that be to places that do not know God, into active Christian communities, or where there is a need to reawaken the faith in those who may have forgotten. We are called to act with mercy and justice in all places. In whatever way God calls, the most important thing is to take a first step. With that, we pray:

Closing Prayer

We give you thanks, God our Almighty Father, for having chosen us and for transforming us into prophets by our Baptism.

We give you thanks, Lord Jesus, for the mystery of your Incarnation and saving work and for calling us to the greatness of discipleship.

We give you thanks, Holy Spirit, for filling us with your love, and, with your light and strength, enabling us in our mission. Amen.

