

# World Youth Day USA Pilgrimage Leaders Guide

## Ecumenical Supplement for WYD Pilgrim Groups



Ecumenism has become one of the central messages of Pope Francis' pontificate. From his meeting in Istanbul with Patriarch Bartholomew in November 2014, to his historic encounter with Russian Patriarch Kirill in Cuba in February 2016, to his planned visit to Lund, Sweden, to commemorate the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation, Pope Francis is embracing his Christian brothers and sisters, heeding Jesus' prayer "that they all may be one" (Jn 17:21).

The state of the world can weigh heavily on the heart of young adults today. During times of terrorism, bigotry, war, and fear, it is important to remember that Catholics are not alone in the project of building up the kingdom of God. Our Christian brothers and sisters can be incredible allies in working to uphold the dignity of each human being endowed by our creator. Developing spiritual friendships with fellow Christians is essential for future peace.

The World Youth Day pilgrimage, both international and stateside, offers an amazing opportunity for Catholic young people to invite other Christians, especially youth and young adults of various Christian traditions, to participate in the building up of God's kingdom, to demonstrate God's mercy, and to renew Christian baptismal commitments beyond their local experience.

The international and stateside pilgrim leader guides, available through the World Youth Day office of the USCCB Secretariat of Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth ([www.wydusa.org](http://www.wydusa.org)), thoroughly outlines various ways engaging young adults in the pilgrim experience. The models and activities suggested could easily be adapted to accommodate ecumenical encounters among youth and young adults.

**Preparation is key** to a successful ecumenical encounter related to World Youth Day. This includes:

- **Finding out if your parish, diocese, organization, or apostolic movement has already-established ecumenical relationships.** Most dioceses have an "Ecumenical & Interreligious Office," or at the very least, a person appointed as an ecumenical or interreligious liaison. Either way, be in touch with them or seek out resources from that particular office or individual.
- **Taking the initial step of reaching out to those individuals or ministry leaders already in ecumenical relationships,** or invest in creating new relationships with Christians of other traditions in the local area. *Relationship is crucial for dialogue to bear fruits.* Building new, intentional relationships does take time – so in this step, it is important to begin those conversations several weeks or months before the WYD Stateside Gathering.

- **Keeping in mind that not every form of dialogue is appropriate for all groups.** Discernment among leaders and organizers should be used to determine which World Youth Day activities are the most accessible and appropriate for the group.
- **Extending an invitation to plan activities with other Christian youth or young adult ministry leaders.** Collaboration in the planning process is part of building ecumenical relationship. See if the local Christian churches have someone (staff, teams, volunteers) with the responsibility for youth or young adult ministries in their community; and contact them by phone or email.
- **Reading the Church documents that outline the process of dialogue.** These include:
  - *Dialogue and Mission* (1984), esp. #29-44, found at: [http://www.pcinterreligious.org/dialogue-and-mission\\_75.html](http://www.pcinterreligious.org/dialogue-and-mission_75.html)
  - *Dialogue and Proclamation* (1991), esp. #9-10, 28,36, 42-54, found at: [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/interelg/documents/rc\\_pc\\_interelg\\_doc\\_19051991\\_dialogue-and-proclamatio\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/interelg/documents/rc_pc_interelg_doc_19051991_dialogue-and-proclamatio_en.html)
  - *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism* (1993), esp. # 13-34,55-69, 102-142, 161-62, 172-74, 204-218, found at: [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc\\_pc\\_chrstuni\\_doc\\_25031993\\_principles-and-norms-on-ecumenism\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_25031993_principles-and-norms-on-ecumenism_en.html)
- **Praying.** Prayer, personal and communal, is foundational for effective dialogue. Take time to reflect on the unity and fellowship of all Christians. In addition, be sure to encourage this prayer for unity and collaboration with your leaders, planners, and pilgrims, as well as sharing communal prayer during the planning process with local ecumenical partners.

**Tailor ecumenical encounters to the needs of the local communities and to the young people** who will be participating in World Youth Day internationally and stateside. Consider incorporating elements of these encounters into the WYD experiences or as a supplement to the ongoing youth and young adult ministry efforts within your community. Some possible ways to incorporate an ecumenical approach to a World Youth Day pilgrimage or local celebration include:

- **Vespers or Prayer Service**
  - *A Dialogue of Religious Experience* allows for the sharing of one's spiritual riches rooted in own tradition. Some suggestions for developing an ecumenical prayer service include:
    - Sharing ways of praying that differ in traditions. Example: the Rosary and the Stations of the Cross are often seen as traditionally Catholic. Sharing these ways, and inviting guests to share their traditions, would broaden the scope of sharing.
    - Collaborating with the leaders of local Christian churches to find a prayer form that may be shared by both or several communities.

### ➤ Dialogue Dinner

- A *Dialogue of Life* is the sharing of aspects of daily life among those of varying faith traditions. Acts of hospitality are crucial for dialogue to be effective. Simply sharing a meal is a key element to good ecumenical relationships. Some suggestions for developing a dialogue dinner include:
  - Planning a meal using cultural aspects of each religious tradition (or of the cultural communities within the local churches); serve ethnic or geographical foods that would highlight the diversity of perspectives.
  - Using “Merciful like the Father” as theme for conversation.
  - Inviting various speakers to give witness to their religious tradition, especially in the topic of God’s mercy and compassion.
  - Preparing suggested questions as conversation starters.
  - Being sure to place a facilitator to foster and encourage discussion at each table.

### ➤ Text Study/Fellowship

- A *Dialogue of Theological Exchange* allows for theological conversations between Christians of differing denominations that express convergences and divergences among traditions. Some suggestions for developing a text study or fellowship include:
  - Using “Merciful like the Father” as theme of study.
  - Exploring multiple Scripture passages around the theme of mercy, most especially the Parable of the Prodigal Son (Lk 15:11-32).
  - Reflecting on the writings of historical and/or contemporary theologians from various traditions on the topic of mercy.

### ➤ Mission Activity

- A *Dialogue of Common Action* is the way in which Christians can live out their common baptismal commitment through acts of service and promoting social justice. Is there a local shelter, soup kitchen, or other agency that is in need of volunteers? Some suggestions for developing a mission activity include:
  - Planning a common activity in the local community.
  - Performing the corporal works of mercy, including feeding the hungry, visiting the sick and the imprisoned, etc. (and sharing with the ecumenical partners the Catholic tradition of corporal and spiritual works of mercy).

### ➤ Pilgrimage

- Pilgrimage is an incredibly important part of the World Youth Day experience, both internationally and stateside. Christian churches within walking distance of each other could serve as pilgrimage points for participants. Some suggestions for incorporating an ecumenical pilgrimage into the overall World Youth Day experience include:
  - Walking between collaborating churches and stopping for prayer along the way.
  - Walking to a site for a shared volunteer work or mission activity.
  - Praying for ecumenical collaborators while on the WYD pilgrimage.

**Follow-up is crucial** for the development of ecumenical friendship. Inviting other Christians to participate in Catholic ecumenical activities should not end with World Youth Day. It is important to make concerted efforts to continue the relationships after WYD has ended. Consider the following:

- **Hosting monthly or quarterly encounters** that continue enhancing ecumenical friendship after World Youth Day. Activities might range from regular Bible studies and fellowship, to seasonal service projects, sporting events, and holiday prayer experiences (i.e. Thanksgiving, Christmas).
- **Connecting with other World Youth Day pilgrims**, and finding how their experience aligned with your international or stateside celebrations in regards to ecumenical engagement. If pilgrims reconnect in the weeks or months following World Youth Day, consider ways to discuss the topic of ecumenical and interfaith relations/dialogue at that gathering.
- **Praying for, learning more about, and supporting the work of ecumenical dialogue** on the diocesan, national, and international levels. Much is being done to build up stronger connections on theological and pastoral levels between Christian denominations, all in the service of Christ, who prayed, “that they all may be one” (Jn 17:21). In the United States, the ***USCCB Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs*** is the U.S. bishops’ office focused on this area of ministry and dialogue. For more about their work, go online to <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/ecumenical-and-interreligious/index.cfm>.

Additional online ecumenical resources include:

- *Unitatis Redintegratio* (The Second Vatican Council’s *Decree on Ecumenism*): [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decree\\_19641121\\_unitatis-redintegratio\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19641121_unitatis-redintegratio_en.html)
- On the Path Toward Christian Unity Videos: <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/ecumenical-and-interreligious/on-the-path-toward-christian-unity.cfm>
- Year of Mercy Resources for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs: <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/new-evangelization/jubilee-of-mercy/upload/EIA-Jubilee-Year-of-Mercy-Resource-FINAL.pdf>



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