



Official Australian World Youth Day briefing document

This document has been prepared by the Communications Office of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference for Bishops, Catholic Media and Spokespeople who will be called upon during World Youth Day in Madrid. For further information, please refer to the contact people at the end of this document.

World Youth Day (WYD) first took place at the invitation of Pope John Paul II to inspire the young people of world in their faith. In 1984 and 1985 he invited young people to Rome for a Palm Sunday celebration in St. Peter's Square before announcing the institution of World Youth Day on December 20, 1985.

The first official WYD was then held in Rome in 1986. Since then, there have been ten International World Youth Day celebrations, in places such as Santiago de Compostela, Toronto, Manila, Paris and Denver and most importantly for Australia, Sydney in 2008.

Sydney World Youth Day saw 450,000 young people descend on Australia in an event which is still bearing much fruit in the Australian Church.

The youth of the world continue to answer the invitation of the Holy Father in staggering numbers and carry home the message received there to be Christ's light to the world.

From the 15th - 22nd August 2011, young people from all countries and nations around the world, will come together in Madrid showing the universality of, and diversity within, the Catholic Church.

Each WYD has seen tremendous growth in the attendance of pilgrims from Australia, and this year's Australian delegation will be around 4,000 pilgrims. This will be the largest group of organised youth to ever leave Australia for a single event.

The Australian pilgrims come from all Australian dioceses, with over a third of the pilgrims coming from the Archdiocese of Sydney.

Groups and movements such as Antioch, Magis, the Dominicans, the Oblates and Emmanuel are also taking groups of young people.

Catholic Schools make up a large percentage of the groups attending, with numbers of up to 1,000 - attesting to the commitment of the Catholic Education Offices around the country. There is also a group of 87 pilgrims attending from the Australian Catholic University.

Special groups who will attend include a delegation of young Catholics with disabilities, a group of pilgrims who have hearing impairments; and at least two official groups of indigenous pilgrims.

On the way to Madrid, each group will go on pilgrimage to places as varied as Lourdes in France, the Holy Land, diocesan pilgrimages in Spain, and some pilgrims will even stop by the newly opened “Domus Australia” on their way.

A country rich in Catholic history, Spain is approximately 92 percent Catholic with 126 Catholic Bishops. Spain is the birthplace of some of the best known saints of the Church such as Teresa of Avila (Known by Spaniards as Teresa de Jesus), St Dominic, St Ignatius of Loyola and St John of the Cross. It is also home to the famous pilgrim “Way of St James” which goes through the north of Spain and France towards a final destination of Santiago de Compostela.

Between 16 and 21 August, the Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI will be welcomed to Madrid and will celebrate with an estimated 2.1 Million pilgrims from across the world.

Accompanying the Australian pilgrims will be 24 Bishops - including Australia’s youngest Bishop Peter Comensoli, recently ordained Auxiliary Bishop of Sydney; and Archbishop John Bathersby of Brisbane who will mark his fifth World Youth Day and the last before his imminent retirement.

President of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference Archbishop Philip Wilson and Cardinal George Pell, Archbishop of Sydney will also accompany pilgrims groups from Adelaide and Sydney and will speak at the Australian gathering on the 16th of August in Madrid.

Pilgrims from the Diocese of Sandhurst will be travelling in honour of the late Bishop Joe Grech who died suddenly in December 2010. Bishop Joe was an avid supporter of youth and young adults and the pilgrims from his diocese will travel displaying an image of him on their pilgrim name tags.

Bishop Anthony Fisher, the Coordinator of the WYD 2008 Sydney week and now Bishop of Parramatta will accompany a delegation of young adults and school students from his diocese on a pilgrimage through the Holy Land.

The Australian Gathering will take place at the *Palacio de Deportes de la Comunidad de Madrid* from 12:00pm–2.00pm on the 16th of August.

All Australian pilgrims are invited to attend and performers include Fr Robert Galea and Gary Pinto, along with testimonies from young pilgrims from around Australia.

For media enquiries during World Youth Day, you are invited to contact one of the following people.

For ACBC related enquiries or to arrange interviews with Bishops, please contact: Beth Doherty, Communications, Australian Catholic Bishops Conference media@catholic.org.au

For Sydney-related enquiries, including interviews with Cardinal Pell, Bishop Porteous or Bishop Comensoli, please contact: Katrina Lee, Communications Director, Archdiocese of Sydney Katrina.lee@sydneycatholic.org

For enquiries related to **Bishop Fisher, WYD Coordinator for WYD08, please contact: Jane Favotto,** editor@parra.catholic.org.au

For all other enquiries or interviews, please be in contact with:

Malcolm Hart, Senior Youth Ministry Projects Office, Bishops Commission Pastoral Life
youthministry@catholic.org.au

Selina Hasham, Communications Manager, Archdiocese of Sydney selina.hasham@sydneycatholic.org