

## **Sacred journey an educational experience too.**

Many youth lament that by attending World Youth Day, they will miss out on important weeks of study at home. Many forgo the opportunity to attend overseas World Youth Days because they will simply miss too much university.

However, at least for some Australian university students, this is about to change, with a new course being offered by the Broken Bay Institute (BBI) and the University of Newcastle.

The course “*Sacred Journey – the 2011 WYD Pilgrimage Online Course*” is being pioneered this year by renowned lecturer Dr Margaret Ghosn and the BBI team and can be credited toward a range of degrees, including degrees in teaching or theology.

The course can also be taken as an independent unit by any young person attending World Youth Day who wants to make an educational experience of it.

Cathy Martorana of the BBI says that the course is a brilliant opportunity to keep studying during the semester of WYD, and be spiritually refreshed by it.

“If you are a teacher, a youth minister or a pilgrim, you can take advantage of the opportunity of going to Spain and really use the reflective nature of this course to set some time apart for God to move in you”, she said.

“We want this to be a faith experience – for people to really reflect on and use their World Youth Day experience outside of those three weeks in Madrid.”

“It’s my belief that in any time set aside, God will move in us. We don’t want World Youth Day just to be an amazing experience, we want to ground that and let the spirit move in our work. We gather as a Church when we go to World Youth Day, and we need to really integrate that and allow it to become a reality in our lives.”

Cathy and those running the course believe it will be particularly helpful for teachers and youth ministers. The principle behind the course is that in the future, they will have the formation and academic qualifications to help young people really experience how God works through events like WYD.

“Dr Margaret Ghosn will oversee the course. She has more than 13 years as a professional in Catholic youth ministry at parish, school, and diocesan levels. She brings an experienced perspective to theological reflection in the WYD Pilgrimage Unit. She is currently BBI’s Youth Ministry Course Coordinator.”

The journaling aspect of the course will not only be the assignment required, but it is also designed to help participants see where God is working in their lives.

“If people go on immersions and don’t have an opportunity to reflect, the experience loses meaning. We want those leading groups to WYD and in future retreats and immersions to really develop leadership skills, otherwise, we are simply the blind leading the blind!” said Cathy.

The course is ideal for young people who are completing a Graduate Certificate in Religious Education, anyone working towards a Masters, and anyone doing teaching.

It is also helpful for any pilgrim doing academic studies, and it can be cross credited as a unit for a wide range of degrees. This means that whether the pilgrim is studying law, journalism or engineering they could use the course as an elective.

“Even for those who haven’t started uni, this is a good way to get your feet wet and really try it,” said Cathy.

Participants in the WYD course will develop an understanding of the historical, spiritual, and theological aspects of pilgrimage through readings provided on-line and reflect on the importance of pilgrimage in the story of Christianity.

***For further information or to enrol visit The Broken Bay Institute [www.bbi.catholic.edu.au](http://www.bbi.catholic.edu.au) or contact Dr Margaret Ghosn at [mghosn@bbi.catholic.edu.au](mailto:mghosn@bbi.catholic.edu.au)***