

***From Panama to Lisbon - Called to Missionary Synodality***  
**International Meeting online, 18 - 22 November 2020**

**Hosting WYD is a grace and a challenge for the local Church**

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I would like to start the presentation of this report by saying:

THANK YOU, POPE FRANCIS  
FOR A  
WYD of the peripheries  
WYD of outreach  
WYD that was Marian  
WYD that was Central-American  
WYD with a Latin-American and Caribbean flavour  
WYD that was inter-religious

THANK YOU TO ALL THE DELEGATIONS FROM THE 145 COUNTRIES OF THE WORLD THAT VISITED OUR PANAMANIAN ISTHMUS AND TO THOSE WHO WENT FOR THE EXPERIENCE OF THE DAYS IN THE DIOCESES.

This presentation will speak of the objectives that were achieved. They were the desire to hold a WYD that would reach out to youth in the peripheries, especially in the Central American region, and that would serve to revive the hope of our young people as active players in the present history of the Church and the world.

To achieve this, we set specific objectives:

I. The spiritual and pastoral preparation of the members of the Local Organising Committee (LOC) of WYD Panama 2019, as well as of the pilgrims:

- We had a Day of Prayer for WYD on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of every month. It was held in different parishes and settings in order to motivate the parish community.
- We had retreats for those working in the various sectors of the LOC.

- There was a pilgrimage through all the dioceses of the image of Our Lady of Fatima. It is much loved in Panama.
- There was the pilgrimage of the WYD Cross and icon of Mary. It was a great blessing for every diocese and for the countries they visited: Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Guatemala, El Salvador, The United States, The Dominican Republic, Haiti, Cuba and Venezuela.
- Inspiration was received from the patron saints of this WYD: St Martin de Porres and St Rose of Lima, St John Bosco and Sr Maria Romero; St Oscar Arnulfo Romero and St José Sánchez del Río. Most of them are Latin-American saints.
- One innovation in the preparation was the 12 catecheses, one each month in the year before the celebration of WYD. They were prepared by theologians and a group of young people. They were based on four main themes: Youth, Ecology, Churches of the Poor and Church of the Martyrs, and Mary – Woman and Mission. Each main theme had three catecheses that were adapted to the youth of today.

### **THE YOUTH SYNOD**

- A significant part of the preparation for WYD Panama 2019 was the Synod on Youth. It strengthened the pastoral vision of the Catholic Church regarding young people as key players in bringing about the transformations needed by the Church and society. As pointed out by Pope Francis, we went from Krakow to Panama with the Youth Synod in between. And so it was.

The gesture of integrating a young Panamanian as an auditor in the Synod of Bishops was an honour for Panamanian youth. So too was the opportunity that was given to me as president of the LOC of the Panama WYD to give a presentation at the Intergenerational Meeting organised by the Pope. It was a space of encounter between young people and grandparents where the young learn from older people in order to move forward more confidently.

A whole itinerary of preparation for the Panamanian pilgrims with the help of older people, as encouraged by Pope Francis, has left a World Youth Day legacy in the creation of our Intergenerational Dialogue Foundation.

### **CONFERENCES AND VISITS**

We took on the task of motivating participation in WYD through gatherings, visits, conferences, etc., and through meetings of CELAM, SEDAC, the Episcopal Conference of the United States, Poland, Italy, Germany, Cuba, Colombia, Spain, a visit by the Patriarch of Jerusalem, and youth meetings in Argentina, among others.

## **DAYS IN THE DIOCESES**

The fact that the Catholic Church in Costa Rica was part of this was a wonderful experience that was strengthened by the presence of a Panamanian delegation on the occasion of the feast of Our Lady of the Angels.

We regret that our dear neighbour Nicaragua was not able to welcome pilgrims as hoped due to the crisis in the country.

It was truly an opportunity for intercultural encounter between pilgrims and the parishes and host communities in the dioceses of Panama and Costa Rica.

## **HIGHLIGHTS THAT DISPLAYED AN OUTGOING CHURCH**

**WYD KID** consisted of three events for children. This was to start building up their enthusiasm now because they will be the pilgrims at future World Youth Days. It was also a way to include them in the preparation.

## **THE WORLD MEETING OF INDIGENOUS YOUTH**

This is the first time there was a meeting of this kind with more than 200 indigenous youth who presented their worldview and challenges to the Church.

## **THE WYD AFRODESCENDANTS FORUM**

This initiative had more than 500 young people who presented their proclamation and their need to be visible in society and the Church.

## **INTERGENERATIONAL DIALOGUE MEETINGS**

These were inspired by Pope Francis when he said that young people should prepare for WYD while holding hands with their grandparents or older people. Three of these events took place with young people and seniors. They were indeed very enriching.

It was an itinerary of preparation for Panamanian pilgrims, hand in hand with their elders, as Pope Francis had encouraged them. It is a legacy of World Youth Day through the creation of the Foundation for Intergenerational Dialogue.

## **YOUTH MINISTRY MEETINGS**

These took place at a regional and continental level. They were ways of preparing for WYD that allowed this ministry to be revitalised at a continental level and hence in Panama.

## **MEETINGS OF LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN COMMUNICATORS**

These were for Catholic newspapers, Catholic television stations, Catholic radio stations and social networks. There was a significant presence of communicators, and volunteers were found to direct communications. Journalistic alliances were formed for WYD and volunteers were recruited for WYD events.

### **INTERRELIGIOUS ENCOUNTERS**

The coming together of faith communities, from Panama and from other countries, was a testimony of unity in our efforts to support young people. It is one of the experiences that demonstrated how we can be diverse but not distant and that we respond when we recognise the positivity in the actions of “others”.

### **PILGRIMAGE OF THE WYD CROSS AND ICON**

This was one of the most interesting experiences. The Cross and Icon visited places in the peripheries and they brought thousands and thousands of the faithful to WYD. In each country they had experiences of faith around the Cross and the Icon of Our Lady.

### **PROGRAMMES FOR YOUTH DEPRIVED OF THEIR LIBERTY**

These young people also felt that they were part of WYD. They could also learn from the WYD catechesis which was animated by Catholic artists. This preparation had its culmination in a meeting of young people in detention with Pope Francis. It allowed the Catholic Church to be closer to young people in those circumstances.

### **MAKING ROSARIES FOR WYD**

This was a gesture of solidarity with the youth of Palestine through the project Prayer for Peace and with Caritas in Palestine. They made rosaries for WYD.

### **BUILDING CONFESSIONALS**

It was a real blessing for prison inmates to be able to make the confessionals for WYD.

### **THE SOCIAL DIMENSION OF WYD**

Young people used the Social Doctrine of the Church in their study of the faith, and this was an experience that remains with them.

The establishment of *Laudato Si* parish teams for WYD to care for the environment, is another legacy that remains today. The environmental impact that could have resulted from such an event was minimised.

## **WORLD YOUTH DAY 2019 IN PANAMA**

The participation of delegations from the geographic and existential peripheries was significant. Groups from Cuba, Nicaragua and Haiti, and the participation of the United States, all helped to give this WYD a sense of ecclesial communion on the American continent. All were included without exception.

**THE YOUTH PARK** contained the following:

**The Vocations Fair “Come follow me”** displayed a diverse range of options in Christian life: priesthood, religious life, married life and single life.

**Park of Forgiveness:** This was where pilgrims could go to confession. There were always priests available.

**“Cristonaut@s” Theme Park:** it was sponsored by the Ramón Pané Foundation. It was divided into rooms that presented the theme of WYD “I am the servant of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word” (Luke 1:38). It was an experience in which technology through *Lectio Divina* brought young people closer to the Word of God.

**Indigenous village:** A place to meet indigenous cultures.

**Laudato Si space:** A place to learn more about the culture of recycling and about the encyclical *Laudato Si*.

**Adoration tent with the Blessed Sacrament.**

**Our Lady of Fatima tent:** This was the earliest pilgrim image of Our Lady of Fatima. It was made according to instructions by Sr Lucia. It had not left Portugal since the year 2000, but it came to WYD as a special blessing for the pilgrims. The Archdiocese of Panama received the approval of the Vatican’s Apostolic Penitentiary for people to obtain a plenary indulgence when in the presence of this Pilgrim Image. They need to comply with the usual conditions for these circumstances which are confession, participation in Mass and communion, and to pray for the intentions of the Holy Father. We witnessed the blessings that were received but cannot be counted.

**Stages for artistic presentations:** These gave ongoing entertainment in Youth Park.

It was impressive to see how there were always young people in attendance.

## **DELEGATIONS FROM THE PERIPHERIES**

This WYD saw great participation from the peripheries. Cuba was present with more than 500 young people, the first time with such a large delegation at this event. Nicaragua had more than 2,700 registered pilgrims and hundreds more who arrived unregistered. The United States, a country that had difficulties with the date, was one of the countries that contributed the most pilgrims, many of

them Hispanic. Haiti participated with more than 250 pilgrims. They were supported by charter flights from Panama at affordable prices.

The strategic location of our country allowed small countries to participate, which would only be a dream in other conditions.

We also emphasise our closeness to the Christians of the Holy Land.

### **VOLUNTEERS**

We were blessed to have so many volunteers, both national and international. We had the gratuitous support of Church and commercial media who placed their technical equipment and personnel at the disposal of this very special event. Companies large and small were positively impacted, not only by profit but also because they rediscovered the joyful face of the Church through the pilgrims from all over the world.