

World Youth Day (WYD) Sydney 2008



✍ Waseem Hermiz -WYD Group Leader

“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses.” (Acts 1:8)

PRAISE to the LORD; we received His Holy Spirit and yes Lord we are now your Witnesses. All 24 of us who went from St. Addai as a group, all 4000 Kiwis from NZ and all 400,000 pilgrims who participated in this year's WYD in Sydney. What a great one week that was in mid July 08. A week in my life and the life of our Parish's youth that is amazing, powerful and life changing.

All that preparation before our trip could not have prepared us for what we got out of this experience. The Evening Vigil and Final Mass led by His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI (or as we used to call him, **Benedetto**) at Randwick – Southern Cross Precinct, was so totally awesome.



You know from the last edition of this magazine that we had 6 months of fund raising, youth activities and the “*Activ8 NZ* - preparing for pilgrimage” program. Also, in this special WYD edition of *Star of the Sea*, there are many pilgrim testimonies from our group and articles about WYD 08. I want to tell you of post WYD 08 and the St. Addai Youth Group. After we came back to a very warm welcome party put on by our parish and families we really got *Activ8ed* with the Holy Spirit. Our original WYD group of 24 pilgrims has now grown to well over 35-40 youth who meet weekly on Wednesday evenings at our Parish hall. The tradition of a Youth Mass that was started in April before WYD is still going strong and is now part of the church program. We have Youth Mass every 1st Sunday of the month where the readings, prayers of the faithful and offertory are done by the youth group. We have had Eucharistic Adoration as part of our youth program and are making an effort to have this made regularly and to be broadened to include the whole parish community to attend and participate.

A Youth Leaders' committee was set up in August to help in organising and putting ideas forward for the youth group as a whole. Its primary aim is towards the youth of our parish to build a solid foundation of faith in and service for Christ. As part of that, the youth group was in great gratitude for Fr. Paul Mingana, who was our visiting parish priest from Our Lady Guardian of Plants Parish in Melbourne, Australia. He gave the youth group in 5 youth meetings “The Chaldean Mass – Explained” series of lectures. This was in the English language and it followed our Chaldean Mass book. The feedback has been great, and this was necessary to give us the foundation in the basics of our Mass and to allow us to participate fully during the Mass. We thank him for his great efforts and pray that he grows stronger in Christ in his priestly ministry.

Also, another priest that helps regularly in our youth group is Fr. Gerges Albutros of St. Elias Melkite Church. We thank him greatly for his work and effort that he puts into our group, and pray that he keeps in good health and service in Christ.

Finally, last but not least, is our very own parish priest, Fr. Fawzi Koro, from everyone in the youth group and especially myself and the Youth Leaders committee we thank him for his generous support towards us and his guiding words and actions in our parish community for the continual support, financial and otherwise, of the youth of today which he says are the parishioners of tomorrow. May God bless him in his priestly service in our community and give him His blessings always. Also, as always, thanks to the whole St Addai parish community for their generous support and prayers for our youth and the future of our community. God bless them and their families always.

A final word from me, your Baba Waseem (my title during WYD and beyond!!), is keep this Spirit of WYD in all of you who got to go to Sydney and spread it to others who did not go. Be Christ Witnesses in your own lives and live in Christ who is One with the Father and the Spirit. Have fun these summer holidays, keep safe and well and hope to see you participate in the 2009 Youth Group program beginning with Youth Camp. May God bless you and your families and we hope to see many more in Spain 2011. God Bless.

WYD 2008 Youth Testimonies

Bashar Matti (22)



Although WYD08 lasted for only 5 days, but our preparation for the trip started a year earlier through fundraising and organizing the trip to Sydney. Despite this hard work from us as a youth group, the event was really worthy and deserves even more which we are planning to do for the next WYD.

Personally, I spent a great inspiring time in Sydney enjoying all the events of WYD08, but the one which had the greatest influence on me was the opening mass. Well, as a Holy Mass it was a regular one regarding the organization (same as any other Sunday Holy Mass) but the big difference was the number of pilgrims who attended the mass which amazed me. It was the first time in my life that I see all this number of Christian people from different nationalities grouped together praying in one place, the only common thing between them was their love for Jesus Christ. When I saw this, I couldn't think of anything but how great Christianity is. This faith that reached every spot on earth and attracted huge number of followers without wars or any blood shaded because as we all know, love is Christianity theme. Yes, it is the love that made us all gather in Sydney.

Love for Jesus, love for each other and love to receive the power of the Holy Spirit and be witnesses for Christ who sacrificed himself just because he loved us.

Before WYD experience, because of the development and the increase in complexity of life which made more and more people deviate from the path of Christ, the terrible nightmare of the near end of Christianity kept following me. These thoughts affected my faith at some stage. However, after WYD, specially the opening mass; the scene of thousands of young people praying, worshipping and declaring their love for Christ made me realize that no matter what happens in this world, there will always be the true believers, armed by the Holy Spirit who will defend the Christianity, now and forever. Those are the true witnesses for Christ.

Loeha Kamal (16)



My trip to Australia to World Youth Day was of the best experiences I have had in my life. It made me feel good and positive about being part of the Catholics all around the world. My favorite event was the Vigil night listening to the band singing about the life of Jesus Christ. It was a fantastic learning experience. The Vigil night, I was sleeping outside, it was cold but I enjoyed sleeping under the sky with all the different people from around the world. The highlight of the trip for me was meeting many young Catholic people from all around the world. I felt proud to be a Catholic.

Diana Esho (21)



WYD 2008 for me was a great experience I never had in my life. One thing that I'm most proud of is that my group and I had a chance to get to know each other very well in this trip; it was amazing how we gathered together, prayed together, helped one another, the most important thing was received the Holy Spirit together. I'm glad that I was there with my group; it was just a great feeling that I can't explain.

JESUS died for us, why wouldn't be there for him. To see all these people from all over the countries was just amazing and great; also to see people from Middle Eastern came directly to be there and to receive the Holy Spirit. To be honest I didn't expect that, but when I saw all these people walking on roads singing for Jesus, it just got into me more.

I also want to say that we need more people to join us for the next WYD 2011 because it's a great experience to be there, I also want to thank all the families that supported us, and GOD Bless You all.

Saad Mansour (24)



Testimony one: Adoration and the witness to God's Love:

I always have used the word "adore" for that special person, but never exactly knew its meaning. I found that 'to adore someone' is to Worship him. Adoration is the action of worshiping. So the adoration is the least we can do to give thanks and love the Lord. From WYD I learnt that adoration is not just in front the Body of Christ, but it should be taken out from the church to adore one another, as Christ is in every single person.

I'll share a story about Mother Teresa I heard in one of the Adorations in WYD:

Once there was a poor ill man in hospital, he was very ill and even the doctors and nurses have given up on his case. He was discharged from hospital with nowhere to go. He found himself a ditch on the street to sleep in until his time has come. His back got very rotten and even the maggots started infesting it. One day, Mother Teresa came across him, she helped him up and took him for care. While she was cleaning his back and wounds, he asked her: "Why are you doing all of this for?" she replied, "It's because I love you". He surprisingly asked again: "You don't even know me, how can you love me?" She paused and thought to herself! Then after a while she answered him: "I Love the Christ inside of you that why I helped you", he was shocked and said: "I want to love the Christ inside of you too".

This story had touched my heart in so many ways the fact that she didn't know him but yet helped him the fact that he didn't have hope yet she restored his hope, the fact that she showed him Christ through her love to him.

I would like to conclude this testimony with a verse Christ has left us with "Love one another as I have loved you". Christ loved us with no limits and big sacrifice, so we should love one another the same way Christ loved us, and by doing so we will be witnesses to Christ our Lord. Amen.

Testimony two:

When I was asked to give a testimony about WYD I didn't really know how to do it; I couldn't remember all what I learnt, so I started putting bullet points of what I have learnt. Most were very nice but one struck out of it being of importance as if it was a message from the Holy Spirit to all. It goes as the following:

"Bless one another with words of peace, actions of love and merciful thoughts".

By doing so, you become a witness to the Lord. I thank you Lord for what you have given me of fruits, I thank you for easing my way into you, and I thank you and adore you for all the love that you have granted us. I pray for those ones who are in darkness may you show them your light may you use me Lord as your tool to witness you to the ends of the earth. Glory be to God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now and forever will be. Amen.

Sara Kourkgy (18)



My World Youth Day experience was nothing short from perfect. To be able to go was amazing, but to actually experience it; no words can describe how good it was.

For me, I feel like in today's society we are surrounded by so many different types of people with different cultures and beliefs, and sometimes we as young Catholics may feel discouraged and 'shy' as such about our faith. World Youth Day has taught me to be proud and loud in what I believe in, Our Father Jesus Christ and to never let anyone make us feel that we are to be ashamed of him and his work.

I can't describe to you, how it felt to be around so many people who believed in the same thing, to share the same faith, and to be able to experience everything around others. The large crowd truly intensified my experiences.

The whole World Youth Day experience was my highlight; but if I was to pick a particular event that I loved fully, it would have to be the night that we stayed at Randwick for the Vigil night. Everyone, over 300,000 of us, is carrying lit candles, standing in front of our Pope, and praising our Lord. I truly felt blessed that night and I could feel the Holy Spirit within us all.

Everyone was so nice and welcoming that we saw them as our new family; we all had a sense that we belonged.

I'd like just to end with a quote from Timothy (1Tim 4:12): "Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity."

Thank you. Hope to see more of you in Spain, Madrid in 2011! DON'T MISS IT!

Renin Yousif (16)



Wow, words can't explain the experience that I had in Sydney, Australia and during WYD 08. It was like what the best 12 days of my life. Well, the journey to Sydney was a wonderful journey a spiritual one I should say. As Pope Benedict said in his quote and theme for WYD 08 "You will receive the power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses".

Our youth group all felt the Holy Spirit in them which was such a great feeling, and such an awesome experience to be apart of. Something that really touched me and changed me, in a way, was when one of our group leaders (Ranny) got us to huddle up and he started speaking about how we were not just here to have a good time we were actually here to see the Pope, and actually feel the love of God, our Father and the Holy Spirit within us. I just felt so overwhelmed, heard him saying all those stuff. I will always remember, with great joy, the various occasions we

spent together in Sydney, Australia. At the end of that unforgettable manifestation of faith and great enthusiasm, I will always cherish this moment forever.

Congratulation!!

Renin Yousif (one of our youth group member) has been selected to be “Girls Sports Captain” for the year 2009 in Papatoetoe High School.

Raneen Attalla (16)



WYD 2008 for me was an experience that would stay with me and I would treasure for the rest of my life. It was the most wonderful display of the unity in our Catholic Church all across the world and just being there among the young people of the church was amazing. It's really great to think that even though we live so far from each other the faith is still the same, and even better is the realization that yes, other young people across the world are going through some of the same spiritual struggles we are facing now in our lives.

The day that the Pope arrived, we had to wait a while to see him. Looking around I saw thousands and thousands of people, hungry to see the Pope's face. Finally, the time had come and we can all see the Pope Mobile getting closer and closer to us. When His Holiness went past, I just felt this great emotion come over me. I was so happy to have had the opportunity to be in our dear Holy Father's presence and more important, just being a few meters away from him.

One of my favorite days during the five days was the night at Randwick Race Course, where we had the Vigil with the Pope and slept under the stars. During the Vigil, candles were handed out and lighted and with the presence of our Holy Father, prayers were said and hymns were sung. It was beautiful seeing everyone with their lighted candles, having a great and spiritual time.

The real highpoint for me, however, was when we were all leaving after the Papal mass was finished. It was then and there that it all came together. I realized what a privilege it was to be there with Our Holy Father and all the Catholic Youth who were so in love with our Lord Jesus. I really had experienced a lot without realizing it. I was definitely transformed, but in a strange and indescribable way. The whole experience was wonderful and eye opening. It was an experience that I will surely never forget.

I am grateful to God, first and foremost. I thank our St.Addai community, for making it all possible for us to go to Sydney this year, to Father Fawzi, to our group leader Waseem, to all other leaders, and especial thanks to our group that went to Sydney for being such an awesome group. I am also thanking God in advance that He will allow us to go to Spain in 2011.

Niran Iskandar (50)



First, I would like to ask God for His forgiveness as I did not realize His work in the youth that went from our church to WYD2008. Second, I would like to ask them for forgiveness, because when we came back and Father Fawzi or Father Gerges asked me: How was the trip? I've answered: "It was fun but no spirituality". I was mistaken. After hearing their testimonies, I thank God for WYD. Their parents were very proud of them and this made them realize that their effort was priceless, and their parents thought that they have grown up in this trip more than they've expected.

I thank God for what I gained from WYD. It made me realize the POWER that we were supposed to have when we join other pilgrims to become Jesus Christ's witnesses. A POWER that is not derived out of magic, nor it is a control over minds when someone of authority speaks. No, it was a power that can be felt in every heart that was in WYD2008 or participated in any kind of functions that led to the beautiful gathering.

- We all saw the love of the people (families) and parishes via their hospitality towards any pilgrim inside Australia or in New Zealand.
- We all felt the love of working as a team to organize such an event.
- We were all patient when we walked slowly to reach our destiny either in Barangaroo or the race course.
- We were all tired but happy to do what we need to do to be part of the Holy Masses of the Pope.
- We were all amazed by the number of priests who came to WYD.
- We were all astonished by the humbleness of the Bishops to come and talk to us in the way they talked to us.



We knew that there was some power that made people volunteer to make our journey as smooth as it can be. All these actions were actually driven and empowered by one thing "**The Love of God that is poured by the Holy Spirit in the people's heart**" and the people's commitment towards this love. Yes, it is the POWER of 'Love of God' that will give us courage to proclaim His Name without fear to make His Family as big as the universe; a family where God is the Father and love is the tie between its members.

The Love of God that make us realize that Jesus Christ was His Light on Earth and we, His Followers are requested to be light for others. And in Randwick Racecourse, I actually understood that saying. One of the volunteers made me realize who is Jesus Christ to me. In Psalm 119, Nun verse 105, King David told God: "Your Word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path". Of course, we know that Jesus Christ is God's Word, but that volunteer made me realize what God's Word does for me. The duty of that volunteer person was to stay awake all night

on a small piece of the path that the pilgrims would use to go from one block to another holding a torch towards the ground to indicate to the passing by pilgrims that there is a hole in the ground to avoid it and not to fall in it or stumble in their walk. He was showing me the wrong part of the road so that my feet will not tremble and fall. Thinking about this, all priests are also somehow like this volunteer man who offered himself freely to serve me during my pilgrim on earth to indicate to me the wrong spots in my path so I would not fall on the way.

We also are requested to hold that torch in the path of others and show them the right doing from the wrong, so that, they will not fall. We hold this torch in our speech, thoughts and actions, and we cannot hold a torch unless we can distinguish the right place where we need to focus the light on (as in a classroom: we cannot explain a subject to a friend who didn't attend the classroom unless we really understand the subject first). And this can be achieved only by our desire to know God and love Him which is achieved by (1) knowing what He said to us through His Son, which is found in the Bible, and (2) inviting Him to our hearts by going to the Holy Mass.

Randa Esraail (17)



Hi. I am part of the group that went to WYD Sydney Australia. I am going to talk about how much fun we had, the experiences I had, and the effect that the journey had to most of us. One of my experiences was taking care of me because I have never travelled by myself before, and that was an awesome experience. My other experience was when I saw the Pope I really felt like kneeling down in front of him and asking him to help us to get back home safely to our families, and leave every sin behind, and become a new and different person. When my parents saw me they said to me that I have changed a lot because I have got a blessing from the Pope and how his words were really powerful and that they reached down into my heart, blood, body and soul. When we were at the park after we had our dinner, one of our group leaders talked to us about why we were at WYD because some of our group members thought that we were there just to have fun and that made us all cry because his words reached down really deep into our hearts and made us realize how lucky we are to be there at the very moment and that's how some of us became better people.

Samih Zaia (15)



What would you do if you were given an opportunity to attend an event that could have a life changing effect on you? Would you go and experience the miracle that is God, or sit at home and carry on with your straightforward life, never finding anything worth living for? Seems like an easy answer but like the weather it may not be what you'd expect. I was given the opportunity to attend WYD Sydney, Australia

in 2008, my parents were willing to pay for all my expenses, but I was still reluctant to attend because I was unsure of the obstacles that would come my way during this 'pilgrimage'. But I eventually recognized that WYD was a once in a life time opportunity and well these things come once in life time. I was first told about WYD in early 2007 and during most of the time between 2007 and until the time we left to go to Sydney we were all working in harmony as one heart and one soul to achieve what I thought to be the Lord's desire, I felt as if He wanted to show us all something, and we would find out what He wanted to show us during WYD.

The moment of truth had finally arrived, 11th of July had arrived, the day everyone had been waiting for, had finally arrived. Our work, our sweat and tears had finally paid off and we were at last about to embark on the true beginning of the journey in discovering myself as a Christian in the modern world. I was amazed when I arrived in Sydney, not because it was spectacular or impressive but because it was so similar to Auckland.

The WYD week was only 5 days and it opened with the Opening Mass. This mass impacted many people in my group and many people I met during WYD. The way which impacted me was mostly the sight of the remarkable number of people there, I had never thought it would reach such an amount, and it was only the first day. Another thing that really impacted me that night was when a man holding a large portrait of another man, this man came up to our group and said if we could pray for the man that was in the portrait he was holding. We asked him who the man in the picture was, he said it was his nephew that was serving as a soldier in Iraq, and he asked us to pray for his safety. We all got into a circle and prayed the "Our Father", he thanked us and made his way to some more groups so they could all pray, as well.

This event had an impact on me because I could see how much this man believed in the power of prayer. I realized that, a prayer is more than just a simple request you ask God, but it is a request to not only help yourself but to help others more than you. This is what, I believe, God's love really is, the love to help other people for God, this is what Peace is as well, and the prayer is the strongest connection you have with God. I realized that with God nothing is impossible.

There was another major thing I realized from the WYD experience and I realized this at the end of WYD. I realized that everyone has been made by God to fulfill a certain task or purpose. The way I found this out was when I was talking to someone, we talked about many things, things to do with ourselves and then he told me that I will help people when I grow up, I asked him how he knew this and he simply said he had many years of experience with these things. At the moment I knew what he said was true, everything that had happened to me during my life and the things I want to do in the future fit in with what he had said.

There were many exiting incidences that helped me to understand things about the

Catholic faith, as I said before, being a Catholic in the modern world can be difficult, there are many temptations that can lead you away from being a good follower of Jesus and a believer of God, but you must remember that your faith is the most important and most precious thing you can hold to during your life. Believe that God never leaves us and you will never feel as if you are alone. There were about 500000 people at WYD, this is just a tiny fraction of the world's huge numbers of faithful Catholics, statistics say that Christianity is the world's most believed in religion, but remember that just because the number is high now it can fall if we don't follow Jesus' teachings and lead more people to Christianity. These are some of the things that I got from WYD but I find keeping up the good habits I have developed during World Youth Day to be the hardest thing, but I believe that with God nothing is impossible.

The Pilgrim, the Pope and Just Better Care

✍ Just Better Care

The success of the World Youth Day events back in July had an amazing effect on the city of Sydney. The happiness of hundreds of thousands of smiling, joyful young people moving around the city seemed to be contagious.



Just prior to the WYD events, Donna White of Just Better Care Sutherland received a call from a Sydney resident, Kossey, who desperately needed assistance with the care of his sister, Hanan. Hanan and their father Bassim were due to arrive from Auckland within the next week for a five-day stay to celebrate WYD. "Hire Disability" of Western Sydney had referred him to Just Better Care and Donna was delighted to assist.

The Just Better Care Sutherland office took action and visited Kossey that day to discuss Hanan's care requirements to be organized around the events Hanan planned to attend during her stay.

Within 24 hours a team of Care Workers with disability assistance experience was in place and ready for Hanan's arrival. It was agreed that due to the type of events being attended, times could be subject to change. Just Better Care Sutherland advised that all Hanan and Kossey needed to do was ring ahead at the end of an event and changes would be accommodated.

Hanan is a youth leader in the Saint Addai Parish in Auckland and lives with her brother and family. She very much enjoyed her first stay in Sydney and is now planning a return trip so that she can see her new friends and more of this lovely city.

While sorry not to have met the Pope personally, Hanan was so glad to have met the caring workers of Just Better Care. Upon her return to New Zealand, Hanan has invited the team to come and visit her and her family any time they are in Auckland.

FOUR SEASONS OF A TREE

✍ Ranny Kettoola

There was a man who had four sons. He wanted his sons to learn to not judge things too quickly. So he sent them each on a quest, in turn, to go and look at a pear tree that was a great distance away.

The first son went in the winter, the second in the spring, the third in summer, and the youngest son in the fall. When they had all gone and come back, he called them together to describe what they had seen.



The first son said that the tree was ugly, bent, and twisted. The second son said no - it was covered with green buds and full of promise. The third son disagreed, he said it was laden with blossoms that smelled so sweet and looked so beautiful, it was the most graceful thing he had ever seen. The last son disagreed with all of them; he said it was ripe and drooping with fruit, full of life and fulfillment.

The man then explained to his sons that they were all right, because they had each seen but one season in the tree's life. He told them that you cannot judge a tree, or a person, by only one season, and that the essence of who they are - and the pleasure, joy, and love that come from that life - can only be measured at the end, when all the seasons are up.

If you give up when it's winter, you will miss the promise of your spring, the beauty of your summer, the fulfillment of your fall.

Don't let the pain of one season destroy the joy of all the rest.

And, don't judge a life by one difficult season.

COUNTING

✍ Annamaria

One is for the Lord above, Who gives His everlasting love.

Two is for the little things That all His kindness brings.

Three is for the Trinity, We give our greatest thanks to Thee.

Four is for the gift of life, through the good times and the strife.

Five is for our family so dear, Both those that are far and near.

Six is for blessings we reap, Moments close to our hearts we keep.

Seven is for food, fun and friends; the joy that they bring never ends.

Eight is for a nice warm bed, Knowing there's a roof safely over my head.

Nine is for every brand new day and for the moments in which we pray.

Ten is for how I can always depend on how life's blessings never really end....