



WORLD YOUTH DAY USA

STATESIDE PILGRIMAGE

Leaders Guide

In preparation for World Youth Day 2023

World Youth Day USA

**Stateside
Pilgrimage
Leaders Guide**

Secretariat of Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops



World Youth Day USA – Stateside Pilgrimage Leaders Guide

Secretariat of Laity, Marriage, Family Life, and Youth

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, D.C.

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World Youth Day USA Stateside Pilgrimage Leaders Guide

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Introduction to the Guide

Congratulations! You have decided to host a stateside pilgrimage for World Youth Day. You have embarked on an adventure of visioning, planning, organizing, budgeting, negotiating, and executing an event. You have also embarked on a process of helping young Catholics encounter Christ and walk in solidarity with fellow disciples in their local community and in solidarity with World Youth Day pilgrims from around the world. The goal of this *Stateside Pilgrim Leaders Guide* is to assist in making the planning less daunting and the experience more fruitful.

When Pope John Paul II came to Denver, Colorado, for World Youth Day (WYD) in August 1993, it was a watershed moment for youth, campus, and young adult ministries across the United States. As each year passes, the international WYD experience continues to be a significant moment in the life of those who participate in the host nation and, in ever-increasing numbers, those who take part digitally and through at-home, “stateside” WYD experiences in their home country.

In 2013, when Pope Francis offered World Youth Day pilgrims a plenary and/or partial

indulgence, he not only included those traveling to Rio, but also those “who are legitimately prevented” from traveling and those who would be following the activities “in spirit...via television or radio, or always with appropriate devotion, by the new means of social communication... wherever they may be during the above-mentioned gathering.”¹ In this way, Pope Francis showed us that the WYD pilgrimage is not limited to the young people who can travel internationally, but to all. In the age of global media and social networks, a new kind of “digital pilgrim” has emerged. Stateside gatherings, like the international pilgrimages, can provoke a transformative or conversion experience in the lives of pilgrims.

What is often unexpected in this process is the change that occurs in the hearts and minds of ministry leaders. The men and women who coordinate stateside WYD experiences may continue to witness a transformation in and conversion of their own hearts and ministry efforts. The *Stateside Leaders Guide* seeks to share perspectives, information, and resources that can be helpful to stateside pilgrim leaders.

¹ http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/tribunals/apost_penit/documents/rc_trib_appen_doc_20130709_decreto-indulgenze-gmg_en.html

First, the *Leaders Guide* explores what it means to be a pilgrim – and in particular, as one who participates from afar. This section will also look at the opportunities and pitfalls of engaging in pilgrimage in the digital age.

The second section of the *Leaders Guide* explores the role you play as a stateside leader. In this section, you are encouraged to go beyond being an organizer to being a witness.

The third section is a workbook designed to aid you in planning your stateside pilgrimage event. It includes checklists and space for brainstorming. This chapter also includes several templates of stateside celebrations.

Finally, the fourth section of the *Leaders Guide* will explore ways that you can assist pilgrims after the WYD stateside event. Often follow-up to ministry programs is overlooked, but it is important to harness the energy and enthusiasm that an event like this generates for the good of the Church and society. Reunions and faith-sharing immediately following the event is helpful, but this guidebook will go a little deeper. It is meant to help you to encourage your pilgrims to pray, reflect, and discern in the time after the WYD stateside experience. It is also meant to assist you in preparing your parish, diocese, eparchy,

and/or community, including the friends and families of participants, to engage them after WYD as missionary disciples – that is, being both a follower of Christ (a “disciple”) and sent by him into the world (a “missionary”). Within this section, there are some suggestions on connecting the experiences of international and stateside WYD pilgrims by reminding them of their common call to solidarity, witness, and missionary discipleship. The *Leaders Guide*, then, is not just a manual for best practices, but a guide for forming missionary disciples from all those who embark on a WYD pilgrimage.

You have an important role as a stateside leader. You and others who have accepted this challenge follow in the footsteps of great Catholic leaders before you. You join the father and patron of WYD, St. John Paul II, who as a priest and bishop in Communist-controlled Kraków, accompanied youth and young adults on their journeys of faith. His example reminds us that this role – the role of a leader who accompanies and journeys with others on the road of discipleship – can be equally demanding and rewarding. Leaders have a unique opportunity to invite World Youth Day pilgrims to follow Christ and to nurture that encounter so that they can take on the task of transforming the world.

The Stateside and Digital Pilgrims

Your role as a stateside WYD leader is not as an activities coordinator or a travel agent.

Rather, you have been called to be a pilgrim leader, accompanying young people on a journey towards an encounter with Christ. The hectic or mundane tasks of preparing a program for youth and/or young adults can sometimes cloud the vision of what a pilgrimage leader has been called to do. It is critical, then, for you, to prayerfully reflect on what you are undertaking, and for the young people with whom you will journey.

Who are the young people who are going to your stateside WYD event? They are sons and daughters of God. Each one has his or her own story. They will come with struggles and pain, as well as joys and anticipation. And they are all young people living in a digital age.

Technology has transformed the culture in ways that many could never have imagined over three decades ago in 1984 when St. John Paul II held the first international gathering of young people in Rome (in what would eventually be called “World Youth Day”). The advances since then have significantly reshaped global events and how these events are shared and experienced.

In the early twentieth century, events such as the Olympics or the World Cup were the main platforms for large international gatherings, but relatively few people experienced them. These were events that newspapers and periodicals vied to report on, later joined by nightly newscasts on radio and television. With technology in peoples’ homes, these special moments in history were no longer limited to the few but included families and friends who gathered and shared the excitement of the experience close to or in real time. Today, these kinds of “viewing parties” – these virtual experiences – are commonplace.

In recent years, virtual attendance at an event such as World Youth Day has become much more common. No longer restricted to cable or television media, you can view WYD activities that are live-streamed, find images of the Pope on your phone, read blogs from local people who are there, etc. On Twitter or Instagram, WYD groups will send virtual pilgrims a flood of photos and quotes from the day's events. Facebook and Google groups can help filter for a particular parish, campus, diocese/eparchy, or movement.

Using technology in service to the faith in this way is truly remarkable. It has opened up tremendous possibilities to Catholic leaders. More people will likely participate in the 2023 WYD through digital media and local gatherings than going to Lisbon. This is both a challenge and opportunity for dioceses/eparchies, parishes, and religious groups to find effective ways to engage with WYD from home.

Putting Pilgrimage in Context

When people go on pilgrimage, where are they coming from? What is going on there? What are the blessings and burdens of the community or nation from which they came? These are not the questions that are usually asked about pilgrims. The main question usually is, “Where are they *going*?” The stories told about pilgrims are typically stories of their journey *to* someplace. But as any good storyteller will remind an audience, “That is not the *full* story.” Every story starts *from* some place, and that place matters.

In literature and film, Homer’s *Odyssey*, Geoffrey Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*, Frank Baum’s *The Wizard of Oz*, Lewis Carrol’s *Alice in Wonderland*, J.R.R. Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings*, and C.S. Lewis’ *Narnia* series are all examples of a journey. But notice that the stories are not over until the heroes return home (or

arrive at a new home) to their community. In other words, what can tend to be overlooked is *the hero’s community*. In the same way, a pilgrim does not exist in isolation but in relationships rooted in the community from which he or she comes.

Think also about the Olympics. The stories of the athletes and their relationships and experiences back home form a big part of the media coverage of the Olympic games. There are stories of high school coaches who inspired athletes to do their best, of sweethearts back home who are watching every day, or parents who sacrificed countless things to make an Olympic moment possible for their child. In every city or village who sent an Olympian to compete, the community is often glued to the television, radio, or news reports, waiting to hear the name of their hometown hero.

It is impossible to understand the full story of the pilgrim without knowing his or her context. When pilgrims gather for World Youth Day, they often carry the flags of their countries—the communities from which they came. Pilgrims come *from* a community, and journey *as* a community, to encounter the Lord, so that they can *return transformed* to the community from which they came and transform that community. At the same time,

there exists a certain fluidity in communities today, which is not always welcoming or nurturing. Even in such cases, when pilgrims return and start sharing their stories, fluid communities can become more solidified. Our modern culture often focuses only on the individual; however, in the Judeo-Christian tradition there is also the sense of each individual being a part of a greater community, of a people.

The Jewish people held three annual pilgrimages or feasts: “Three times a year, then, every male among you shall appear before the Lord, your God, in the place which he chooses: at the feast of Unleavened Bread, at the feast of Weeks, and at the feast of Booths” (Dt 16:16). Although the men alone were instructed to go up to the place the Lord commanded, the pilgrimage was undertaken for the entire community – women and children included. Certainly, practical considerations played a role. The Jews in Galilee would have a much harder time going to the feast or pilgrimage than those in Judea. It would be difficult to leave behind homes and cattle, both unprotected and unwatched. Because of the strong emphasis on communal identity of the Jewish people, when the men left on pilgrimage, everyone was deeply aware that it was for everyone. Every Jew

participated in the feast through the men who went up to Jerusalem.

The Catholic Church, too, has a communal identity as a community of missionary disciples; a pilgrim people. “Through Baptism, we are freed from sin and reborn as sons of God; we become members of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission” (CCC 1213). St. Paul says: “For as in one body we have many parts, and all of the parts do not have the same function, so we though many, are one body in Christ, and individually parts of one another” (Rom 12:4-5).

Thus, the Christian pilgrimage (like the World Youth Day journey) is an expression of *being the Church*. Pilgrims go on this pilgrimage not only for themselves. The Christian pilgrimage is to heaven to join the communion of saints united with the Triune God.

In the Church, pilgrimage and community are inseparable. Not only is the community the starting point on the pilgrim’s journey, but it serves as a reason to go. Those who cannot go are drawn into it because they are part of the community of the Church. They are invited into a solidarity that is meaningful—because *the Church* gathers in Lisbon, they do too. The stateside gatherings, viewing parties,

parish prayer services, school events, digital pilgrimages, etc. are ways that Catholics in the United States can experience WYD without getting on a plane. The journey is for all. Understanding the young people on this journey – and the community from which they come (and to where they will be going next) – is key to better appreciating the people that God has put into your care.

Pilgrimage in the Digital Age

There is a general eagerness on the part of those who minister to young people to jump into the latest technology, like the eagerness of a missionary who wants to enter into the native culture. The New Evangelization often seems to require a variety of media to reach youth and young adults because these generations are so digitally connected.

Reports suggest that the average young person spends 3 hours a day watching television² and as much as nine hours a day using media in general (checking social media, playing video games, watching Youtube videos, etc.).³ Through multiple platforms,

young people see as many as 3,000 advertisements per day⁴ and will view 200,000 acts of violence in the media by the age of 18.⁵ Eleven years ago, advertisers spent in excess of 17 billion dollars on marketing to teens per year.⁶ These statistics are quite high and the impulse of the concerned parent or ministry is to counteract the onslaught of secular media by adding sacred media to the flood.

Researchers conducted studies demonstrating that “Facebook envy” is a reality plaguing those who use social media regularly. Someone viewing images on social media sees “happy” people all the time; meanwhile, real life is never happy all the time. Envy may surface over a friend’s good looks, vacation pictures, new job, boyfriend or girlfriend, or baby. The research showed that 36% of respondents in the survey demonstrated negative reactions to what they saw on Facebook, including sadness, envy, boredom, frustration, loneliness, anger, and so forth.⁷

Keeping this in mind, leaders of dioceses, eparchies, parishes, and religious groups who

² <https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000355.htm>

³ <http://www.cnn.com/2015/11/03/health/teens-tweens-media-screen-use-report/index.html>

⁴ *Goodman E. Ads pollute most everything in sight. Albuquerque Journal. June 27, 1999:C3*

⁵ Senate Committee on the Judiciary. Children, violence, and the media: a report for parents and policy makers. September 14, 1999.

⁶ James McNeil quoted in Horovitz, B. (2006, November 22). Six Strategies Marketers use to Make Kids Want Things Bad. USA Today, p. 1B

⁷ Krasnova, Hanna, and Helena Wenninger, Thomas Widjaj, and Peter Buxmann. “Envy on Facebook: A Hidden Threat to User’s Life Satisfaction?” Institute of Information Systems, Humbolt-Universität zu Berlin: Berlin, Germany (with Technische Universität Darmstadt: Darmstadt, Germany). February 27, 2013.

desire to share content about WYD through social media should be cautious. Posting and sharing content does not necessarily yield community and connection. Social media should build upon concrete relationships. Parishes, campuses, dioceses, eparchies, movements, and other groups can transform the experience of all those participating in World Youth Day from afar via technology by striving to cultivate real relationships and a real encounter with the Lord in person... this is the power and potential of stateside WYD celebrations and events.

WYD is meant for the world

The Church *is* the Body of Christ. What happens for part of the Church happens for all. There are different roles, but the same Spirit. As St. Paul reminds the Romans, members of the Church, “though many, are one body in Christ and individually parts of one another” (Rm 12:5).

While WYD is a particular event, it is of and for the whole Church; it is meant for the world, not just for those who can travel there. Those who attend have a great opportunity and responsibility. Their mission is to be pilgrims, not tourists or vacationers. Their responsibility to the Church is similar to Jewish men directed to go up to Jerusalem.

They go on behalf of the whole community, united as one Body in Christ.

Often the community’s role in WYD is neglected. How can dioceses, eparchies, religious institutes, and parishes foster solidarity among international pilgrims and stateside communities? The key is preparation and intentionality. Here are some suggestions.

Prior to WYD, there should be opportunities for young people, as well the diocese/eparchy or parish, to prepare for the festival. Past participants (“WYD alumni”) can share their wisdom and insights with new pilgrims in large assemblies or small groups. Youth and young adults who are not going to WYD can share with the international pilgrims some messages of hope or burning questions about faith to consider. After this exchange, the pilgrims will be better equipped fulfill their role as ambassadors. Ideas for gifts to give pilgrims from other countries could originate from those who remain. “Virtual pilgrimages” should be encouraged with special consideration of how to do it well and in a spirit of solidarity.

As the pilgrims go forth, the community can gather to bless them. *The Book of Blessings*, the *Catholic Household Blessings & Prayers* (published by and available through the United States

Conference of Catholic Bishops) and the USCCB's World Youth Day USA website (www.wydusa.org) have prayers that can be used or adapted. This can be done publicly as part of the community's liturgy or in a special prayer service including the local bishop or pastor. Local media could be invited to cover the event, prepped with the talking point that these pilgrims are going *on behalf of the community and with the community's blessing*. At the gathering or separately, community members could write petitions on small pieces of paper and entrust them to the internationally-bound pilgrims to bring with them. Prayer partnerships between international and stateside pilgrims could be organized. There could also be an intergenerational aspect to the exchanges (between international and stateside pilgrims), remembering that WYD is for the whole Church, not just youth and young adults. Parents, children, and older members of the community should be included somehow to foster a greater sense of community and eliminate divisions. All of these actions would help to shape the *corporate identity* of the pilgrims.

During the international WYD events, social media can allow for people to make a virtual pilgrimage in a spirit of solidarity and unity. Pilgrims can produce blogs, posts, and tweets, remembering to pray for the community back

home. They can be encouraged to tell their stories in this way, but should be taught how to do this without compromising the fact that they are on a pilgrimage. A press release and contact with reporters of major television stations and papers that will cover the event can help raise visibility. Reporters often want to cover the local angle of an international event and viewers want to see it.

It is also possible to initiate a direct connection using technology to create a meaningful exchange. Stateside pilgrims can experience catechetical sessions, the Pope's speeches, prayer vigils, and the concluding Papal Mass over streaming video. Skype or FaceTime (through Wi-Fi and wireless hotspots) is another way for pilgrims to remain connected to the community. Imagine and plan how this can affect stateside gatherings and coordinate efforts to make it happen.

Promoting stateside gatherings is a strategy for decreasing the isolation and "Facebook envy" that might be an unintended side-effect of a big event. Gathering with other stateside pilgrims is a great way for those young people who are not able to travel to be a part of something special. When the community gathers in one place, it is easier to experience a corporate identity. There is a camaraderie

and joy in being together to watch the WYD events that cannot be compared with consuming quotes on Twitter or watching alone at home. The local experiences can be memorable in their own ways.

Finally, what happens when the international pilgrims come back home and join up with stateside pilgrims? The hope is that everyone has had an experience of encounter and transformation and that they are ready to transform their communities. Evenings of reflection where the stateside and international pilgrims report back to the community or offer gifts to the community are ways to help solidify the impact of WYD. If a hundred pilgrims each brought home ten rosaries that were blessed by the pope, that would mean 1,000 people who were given a piece of the pilgrimage.

Since 1984, over half-million young people from the United States have participated in a WYD. How many came back to communities without the mission or permission to work for the transformation of the Church? How many youth and young adults, who could not travel to WYD, never even knew about it? The community is and must be integral to the pilgrim's story. In more recent times, digital media has increased the access of non-pilgrims to WYD, but when it is left to chance

and to mere consumption, there is no guarantee that it will bear fruit. Leaders are challenged today to consider how to engage those who remain.

From time to time, when people come home from a pilgrimage, retreat, or mission trip, they often do not know what to do next. They may forget that the community was the source of their journey and, ultimately, their final destination. What is done to cultivate this communal understanding will help determine if the resources invested in an endeavor like World Youth Day serve only individuals or the whole Church community.

Conclusion

WYD is a celebration meant for the whole Church. The entirety of the Church in the United States is invited to celebrate it, not only those able to travel. As technology and media have advanced, the ability to connect people to the celebration has increased exponentially, but must be done intentionally.

Leaders of dioceses, eparchies religious institutes, and parishes are now able to understand more fully that this international festival is not just for the few, but is intended for everyone. The young people who celebrate stateside are pilgrims too, on the same journey of faith as travelers to WYD.

While they will have distinct experiences, they can be united as one community, seeking closeness to God. Recovering the historical relationship between pilgrim and community helps focus the planning for stateside pilgrims and put it in its proper context. The recovery of the pilgrim/community relationship is not only a benefit to the Church in the short term but is essential in an age where media consumption is hazardous if left unguided and disconnected.

Social media envy, and its resulting isolation, are just part of the division that can occur between those who can and cannot attend World Youth Day. Intentional work on the part of dedicated pastoral ministers, in particular those called to lead stateside World Youth Day gatherings, can cultivate the relationship between all young pilgrims and their communities, and in so doing, strengthen the Church.

This responsibility, then, rests with the pastoral leaders of Catholic communities across the country. They are called and asked to intentionally draw more people into the experience of World Youth Day – and open wide the doors to Christ.

Encounter, Accompany, Send: The Role of the World Youth Day Pilgrimage Leader

Coordinating a stateside gathering for World Youth Day can be daunting. With all the logistics to worry about and the responsibility of spiritually accompanying young disciples, WYD can fill you with anxiety. Yet, thousands of people continually step forward and take on the mantle of the pilgrimage leader, both those internationally-bound and at-home in their native countries, in communion with the bishops and the Holy Father.

Co-Workers in the Lord's Vineyard

“The Lord does not keep his distance, but is *near* and *real*. He is in our midst and he takes care of us...”⁸

Pope Francis preached these words at the Shrine of Czestochowa at WYD 2016. He reminded the young people that Jesus Christ comes to encounter us in real and personal ways. He accompanies us, and sends us on mission to do the same in the lives of others. Jesus Christ is in our midst, encountering, accompanying, and sending. But the choice to *engage* in the encounter, to *be* accompanied, and to *be* sent is ours. It is never forced; it is a

free choice in response to an invitation from Jesus Christ.

The invitation from Jesus Christ comes in many ways. The ministry of a stateside pilgrimage leader is invaluable for assisting that invitation.

Stateside leaders serve WYD pilgrims in a unique and privileged way, by helping open the door to Jesus Christ through the experience. God has called many ministry leaders to the important service of being co-workers in his vineyard. The stateside leader, then, is engaged in the evangelizing work of the Holy Spirit in and through the Church that sends the baptized on mission to encounter, accompany, and send others. Facilitating a deeper encounter with Jesus Christ and his Church, and sending missionary disciples forth into the world, is the goal of any Catholic pastoral leader.

ENCOUNTER

There are a variety of encounters that take place in a WYD pilgrimage, stateside or otherwise: with Jesus, with the Church, with other pilgrims, and with anyone who is

⁸ Pope Francis, Homily for Mass on the Occasion of XXXI World Youth Day, Kraków, July 28, 2016, 5.

present. Each encounter is an opportunity. The pilgrim leader helps to make all those encounters possible, memorable, and lasting.

An Encounter with Jesus Christ

Pope Francis invites “all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting him encounter them.”⁹ What does it mean to have a personal encounter with Jesus Christ? It means experiencing him in the Sacraments, in the Scriptures, in prayer, in others, and in service. This encounter is at the core of who we are as Christians. As Pope Benedict XVI said: “Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.”¹⁰

WYD is an opportunity offered by the Church to all young people to encounter Christ. Many people talk about their experience of WYD as “life-changing.” They experience Christ and his Church in a unique and special way. Leaders need to recognize this opportunity. As Pope Francis notes, the encounter is really the developing of a

“friendship” with Jesus.¹¹ The stateside leader can assist the young people in developing their friendships with Jesus Christ; this is made possible by the leader’s own continuous renewal of his or her friendship with Jesus. Pope Francis in his 2015 WYD Message gave a few ways to renew this friendship every day: through participation in the Sacraments, particularly Eucharist and Reconciliation, reading Sacred Scripture, personal prayer, and serving those in need, particularly the poor.¹² Stateside leaders are encouraged to encounter Christ on a constant basis. In this way, they will be credible witnesses when they invite their pilgrims to do the same.

An Encounter with the Church

The encounter with Jesus Christ is always in and through his Church. The Church is spread throughout the world, and a WYD leader will need to be prepared for this encounter with the Church Universal and her chief shepherd, the Holy Father.

The Pope, who is Vicar of Christ, “is the perpetual and visible source and foundation of the unity both of the bishops and of the whole company of the faithful.”¹³ WYD is a public opportunity for young people to

⁹ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 3.

¹⁰ Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, no. 1; cited by Pope Francis in EG, no. 7.

¹¹ See *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 266.

¹² Pope Francis, Message for the 30th World Youth Day, 3.

¹³ *Lumen Gentium*, 32, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 882.

witness the unity of the Church in the midst of its diversity.

When a youth or young adult attending a stateside event has an encounter with Christ through the Sacrament of Reconciliation, adoration before the Blessed Sacrament, while listening to a witness or presentation, or during a particularly moving song during Mass, it can be a truly transformative experience for both pilgrims and leaders. Leaders need to be prepared and help prepare pilgrims and themselves for these encounters with Christ and the Church.

An Encounter with Fellow Pilgrims

The stateside pilgrimage leader may not meet many of their pilgrims until the day of the celebration. However, this does not mean that a leader cannot prepare stateside pilgrims prior to the event. Opportunities for learning and reflection can be a regular part of pre-event communications. Catechesis could be integrated into social media and on websites in the parish, diocese, eparchy, or other settings connected to the local celebrations. The pilgrim leader should also have a team of youth or young adults who are assisting them; the ministry coordinator can deepen the encounter with these young leaders, better enabling them to accompany their peers during the event. Forming these relationships

in advance of the stateside celebration is an important element of preparation.

An Encounter with Others

The time of pilgrimage is also a time of encounter with others along the way. Some of these people (including friends, families, and active members of the Church community) will be open to encounter with the leader and with pilgrims, while others (including distant friends and acquaintances, vendors and secular partners, news media, and the general public) may be indifferent at best or hostile at worst. The important thing for a leader is to be constantly welcoming, loving, and hospitable – truly witnessing “the joy of the Gospel.”

Encounters – with Christ, the Church, other pilgrims, and the many others along way – will often lead to new friendships. On a practical level, social media, email, and reunions provide a means to continue relationships. On a deeper level, those encounters and a more mature understanding of encountering Christ and the Church help to support the growth of a person’s faith.

ACCOMPANIMENT

Pope Francis says: “The Church will have to initiate everyone – priests, religious and laity – into this ‘art of accompaniment’ which

teaches us to remove our sandals before the sacred ground of the other. The pace of this accompaniment must be steady and reassuring, reflecting our closeness and our compassionate gaze which also heals, liberates and encourages growth in the Christian life.”¹⁴

A stateside leader is not simply an organizer, but one who spiritually accompanies a community. Furthermore, the leader is not accompanying pilgrims by him or herself. Jesus Christ, fellow pilgrims, the local bishop or pastor, and others encountered along the way are also accompanying them. Added to this, the leader is also on the journey; leaders themselves are pilgrims.

As Pope Francis said, “Although it sounds obvious, spiritual accompaniment must lead others ever closer to God, in whom we attain true freedom.”¹⁵ Pope Francis in his apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, teaches that good spiritual accompaniment includes what might be called growth-inducing acceptance and evangelizing service.¹⁶

Acceptance and Challenge

None of us is completely mature in our relationship with Jesus Christ and our

neighbor. We are all in need of growth, but often we need others to show us what we need to work on. The pilgrim leader offers acceptance of another person in a way that may sometimes challenge that person to a deeper relationship and alignment with Christ. Pope Francis warns that we cannot truly know the “person’s situation” before God from “without.”¹⁷ God alone knows the person’s heart. But a leader does know some things about choices and behaviors. Pope Francis says that the “The Gospel tells us to correct others and to help them grow on the basis of a recognition of the objective evil of their actions (cf. Mt 18:15), but without making judgments about their responsibility and culpability (cf. Mt 7:1; Lk 6:37).”¹⁸

The stateside leader can keep this very careful balance through recognition of his or her own sinfulness and need for mercy. Everyone needs God’s love and mercy; a profound awareness of this fact should be an important aspect of a pilgrimage.

Everyone who attends the stateside WYDs will come with their own struggles, sinfulness, and personal frustrations. Sometimes these may be shared, and sometimes not. Good leaders recognize and accompany these young

¹⁴ *Evangelii Gaudium*, 169.

¹⁵ *Evangelii Gaudium*, 170.

¹⁶ Cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 171-173.

¹⁷ *Evangelii Gaudium*, 172.

¹⁸ Ibid.

people through their presence, invitation, and encouragement.

Evangelizing Service

When a pilgrim experiences mercy and healing in Christ, he or she may desire to evangelize and serve. As the Holy Father said, “Our personal experience of being accompanied and assisted, and of openness to those who accompany us, will teach us to be patient and compassionate with others, and to find the right way to gain their trust, their openness and their readiness to grow.”¹⁹ World Youth Day provides youth and young adults a chance to step into servant leadership.

From its start, WYD has offered participants an opportunity to be evangelized and to evangelize. Leaders and pilgrims embark on the journey with the hope that they will have a deeper encounter with Jesus Christ and others. Often, they experience personal transformation, reconciliation, and renewed life in Christ. This cannot be kept to oneself.

The leader and pilgrims accompanying one another are “missionary disciples”; they are both followers of Christ (disciples) and sent by him (missionaries).

The people participating in the stateside WYD pilgrimage have chosen to be there.

Therefore, the opportunity is ripe for these young men and women to deepen their commitment to be disciples of Christ Jesus, making the choice to do so in response to their encounter with the Lord and others who are witnessing Christ to them.

Effective ministry leaders can witness to this discipleship in all that is said and done on the pilgrimage – from email communication and announcements prior to and during the event to answering the same question for the fiftieth time. The experience of pilgrimage and the encounters involved will also help the leader grow as a disciple.

SENDING

Pope Francis invites us “to ‘go out’ as missionary disciples, each generously offering their talents, creativity, wisdom and experience in order to bring the message of God’s tenderness and compassion to the entire human family. By virtue of the missionary mandate, the Church cares for those who do not know the Gospel, because she wants everyone to be saved and to experience the Lord’s love. She ‘is commissioned to announce the mercy of God, the beating heart of the Gospel’

¹⁹ *Evangelii Gaudium*, 172.

(*Misericordiae Vultus*, 12) and to proclaim mercy in every corner of the world, reaching every person, young or old.”²⁰

The role of the leader continues after the stateside event comes to an end. All pilgrims are sent forth and called to live as missionary disciples. You assist, equip, and accompany pilgrims so that they might come to a deeper understanding of their experiences. In so doing, they can more fully live out the WYD encounter with Jesus every day.

Continuing the Pilgrim Journey

At WYD, the Church puts its trust in the young. WYD pilgrims need to be trusted to “leave a mark on history,” as Pope Francis said at the final gathering in Kraków.²¹ He challenged young people to courageously “set out on new and uncharted paths. To blaze trails that open up new horizons capable of spreading joy.”²² The theme of WYD 2023 is “Mary arose and went with haste.”²³ Leaders can prepare pilgrims to be more sensitive to the voice of the Lord in their lives by encouraging them to remain close to the Sacraments, providing them resources for vocational discernment, and creating

communities from which they can draw strength and courage.

The pilgrim journey is a lifelong one that might include additional WYDs, possibly even leading a pilgrimage in the future. World Youth Day leaders, international and stateside, have been called by God for this service, often through the invitation of another.

The lifelong pilgrim lives the encounter with Jesus Christ in his or her daily life. Gathering those stateside pilgrims along with the international pilgrims after WYD can help the young people share and integrate their experiences and, ultimately, build upon them. For example, many WYD pilgrims are also discerning their vocation in life. The leader assists in this discernment process by witnessing to his or her own discernment process or current vocation and encouraging pilgrims to consider God’s calls. This may take place in conversations during the journey but also during the weeks or months following World Youth Day.

Living the encounter with Jesus Christ also means being of service. Pope Francis teaches that “evangelizing means bearing personal

²⁰ Message of Pope Francis for World Mission Day 2016, May 15, 2016.

²¹ Pope Francis, Prayer Vigil with the Young People, XXXI World Youth Day, July 30, 2016.

²² Ibid.

²³ Lk 1:39.

witness to the love of God, it is overcoming our selfishness, it is serving by bending down to wash the feet of our brethren, as Jesus did.”²⁴ Most young people want to be of service to others, but often do not know how. The pilgrim leader can assist youth and young adults in reflecting on how they can be of service to the Church and to those in need in the world. The leader can provide opportunities to serve the poor or point to opportunities in the local area. The leader can witness to the fact that “to love means to serve and service increases love.”²⁵

Sending Forth

The actual WYD gathering will quickly come to an end. Therefore, the leader needs to *send forth* those who gather, equipping them with a mission and a purpose.

Like the dismissal at every Mass, stateside pilgrims need to “go, glorifying the Lord” by their lives.²⁶ As Pope Francis confidently told millions of pilgrims as they prepared to leave Kraków in 2016, “Don’t be afraid to say ‘yes’ to him (the Lord) with all your heart, to respond generously and to follow him! Don’t let your soul grow numb, but aim for the goal

of a beautiful love which also demands sacrifice.”²⁷

This is the life of the disciple, the one who is sent. When Jesus sent out the seventy-two, he had them take little on the journey, beyond trust in him (cf. Lk 10:1-12). They returned to him joyfully telling stories of all that was done in his name (cf Lk 10:17-20).

Jesus Christ continues to do the same today. The pilgrims are sent on mission – they are missionary disciples.

Living as Missionary Disciples

When he spoke to the crowd at the end of World Youth Day in Kraków, Pope Francis said, “The joy that you have freely received from God, freely give away (cf. Mt 10:8): so many people are waiting for it!”²⁸

Just as the leader and the pilgrims have encountered Jesus Christ, so they have a mission to assist others in having such an encounter. St. John Paul II, the father and patron saint of World Youth Day, explained this dynamic very well: “Our personal encounter with Christ bathes life in new light,

²⁴ Homily for the Closing Mass on the Occasion of the XXVIII World Youth Day, Rio de Janeiro, July 28, 2013, 3.

²⁵ Pope Benedict XVI, “Meeting with Volunteers of the XXVI World Youth Day, August 21, 2011.

²⁶ *Roman Missal*, Dismissal.

²⁷ Homily for Closing Mass on the Occasion of the XXXI World Youth Day, Kraków, July 31, 2016, 7.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

sets us on the right path, and sends us out to be his witnesses.”²⁹

The response to the personal encounter as a witness sent by Jesus Christ into the world is called living as a missionary disciple.

This term captures a reality which is central to the work of the New Evangelization as the Church moves more fully from maintenance to mission.³⁰ Pope Francis uses the term very often in his preaching and catechesis and explains it clearly in his apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*.

In virtue of their baptism, all the members of the People of God have become missionary disciples (cf. *Mt* 28:19). **All the baptized**, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the faith, **are agents of evangelization**, and it would be insufficient to envisage a plan of evangelization to be carried out by professionals while the rest of the faithful would simply be passive recipients. **The new evangelization calls for personal involvement on the part of each of the baptized.** Every Christian is challenged, here and now, to be actively engaged in evangelization; indeed, anyone who has

truly experienced God’s saving love does not need much time or lengthy training to go out and proclaim that love. **Every Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus: we no longer say that we are “disciples” and “missionaries”, but rather that we are always “missionary disciples.”**³¹

Bringing Christ to others (as a missionary disciple) compels one to know and live the faith. Being catechized does not simply mean *knowing* the faith; it also involves *witnessing* to the faith in our lives. Formation in the faith is meant to be ongoing – even for an adult.

Additionally, one does not grow in faith alone; rather, it is the work of Christ within us and in a community. Leaders are called to be regularly engaged in these efforts (ongoing formation, community activities) if they are to model them for pilgrims.

The parish is the regular place where leaders and pilgrims are nurtured by Christ through the community of faith. The parish is the local source for the sacraments and service to the poor and suffering, yet leaders and pilgrims cannot remain within the comfort of the

²⁹ St. John Paul II, Message of the Holy Father on the Occasion of the XVII World Youth Day, July 25, 2001.

³⁰ See XII Ordinary Synod of Bishops (2012), Proposition 22.

³¹ *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 120. Emphasis added.

parish. All Christians need to move outward and bring others to encounter Christ.³²

Leaders and pilgrims are encouraged to look beyond their parish boundaries and buildings to find more places where the call to missionary discipleship can be lived out.

Missionary disciples are sent to not only preach, but to *heal* (see Lk 9:2,10:9). The world needs so much healing. All the baptized can and must be bearers of love, which is the only thing that can heal the soul. Leaders may be able, by the help of the Holy Spirit, to identify and help heal the wounds that they see in the young people in their care. The pilgrims who experience this healing ministry from their leaders may, in turn, help to heal those around them in the future.

Conclusion: Be Not Afraid

Christ continually reminds us, as he reminded the first missionary disciples: “Do not be afraid...” (Mt 28:10) The WYD experience, with its massive size and participation of lay leaders, priests, deacons, and religious, bishops, and the Holy Father himself, reminds us that we are not alone on this journey as leaders. Pilgrimage leaders should know that they are united with leaders around the world

and that those leaders can be a wealth of information and advice.

As Pope Francis told the vast crowd of pilgrims and leaders in Rio de Janeiro as they were about to embark on a mission of service in the world (and which can be applied to the work of the pilgrimage leader today): “Jesus did not say: ‘One of you go,’ but ‘All of you go’: we are sent together. Dear young friends, be aware of the companionship of the whole Church and also the communion of the saints on this mission. When we face challenges together, then we are strong, we discover resources we did not know we had.”³³

³² See *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 121.

³³ Homily for Closing Mass on the Occasion of the XXVIII World Youth Day, Rio de Janeiro, July 28, 2013, 2.

Hosting a Stateside World Youth Day Pilgrimage Process and Sample Formats

The following is a process for planning a successful stateside World Youth Day event.

It is divided into four sections:

- (1) **Setting a Vision**
- (2) **Logistical Elements**
- (3) **Preparation Checklist**
- (4) **Sample Schedules**

The USCCB Secretariat of Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth is grateful to the Archdioceses of Chicago and Washington (D.C. and Maryland) and the Dioceses of Harrisburg and Wheeling-Charleston for their assistance in developing several of these suggested plans.

SETTING A VISION

Before event details and logistics are set, it is essential to develop a vision for the stateside event – that includes the people, purpose, and goals for the program. Consider the following elements that comprise the vision: target audience(s); vision of success; objectives; event summary and theme; and collaborators.

Target Audience(s)

Start with people before the program. Identify the **primary and secondary audiences** on which your event is focused. The official

target age range for WYD for the United States has traditionally been ages 16 to 35; however, for stateside celebrations, these parameters can be more flexible. For many events, it would make sense to narrow the focus to include a primary audience and a secondary audience. You may decide that you cannot effectively reach everyone in the age range and must leave some out. In addition, in the U.S., this age range is composed of several sub-groups (teens, collegians, young singles, dating and engaged couples, and across different cultural communities). For example:

Primary Audience: Catholic young adults, in particular college students, ages 18-25, who live or work within the diocese/eparchy

Secondary Audience: Post-collegiate-age young adults, ages 25-35, who live or work within the diocese/eparchy or across the state

Audiences Not Included: Catholic youth ages 13 to 17 (e.g. no one under age 18)

This is only an example and is not indicative of a best practice for stateside gatherings. For certain communities, high school youth could be the primary audience instead of young adults. Cultural factors may also play into the identification of target audiences. Consider

the possibility of hosting a bilingual stateside celebration or one in whatever language is most common in the local area, and then from that reality, identify a target audience. Clarifying a primary and secondary audience assists your planning team and is especially important for an event like a stateside World Youth Day for many reasons:

- There are distinct cultural expectations for who qualifies as “youth” at an international level (in the United States English-speaking culture, this can be junior high and high school students; in Latino culture, “jóvenes” means mid-teens through marriage; in Europe, the term generally covers the ages 16 to 35).
- Many adults who have had positive experiences at a past WYD event may desire to participate in some way.
- Dioceses and eparchies often have different age groups that they include for international and stateside celebrations.
- Diocesan and parish leaders may want all young people in their communities (even children) to be able to participate, whether or not they are within the intended audience (age 16-35) of World Youth Day.

- If families and older (age 35+) members of parishes, dioceses, eparchies, or movements can participate in the event, the team will need to consider what roles they are allowed to play, since additional attention will need to be paid to child and youth protection.

Vision of Success

Now that you have identified the target audiences, you can focus on your vision for the celebration. What are your goals for the event? How do these goals connect to the overall vision of WYD? How do they connect to the larger vision of evangelizing and inspiring the young Church? What do you hope to accomplish by the event? What do you hope participants get out of it? This is the time to dream up the ideal event. While this step seems short, crafting a vision for your audience is a key step in the process – one that defines every step going forward.

Objectives & Performance Indicators

This vision of success for your audience and outcomes will help you to identify many objectives that will help you know the steps you need to take to make the vision become a reality. Determine three to four objectives for the pilgrimage. These may be tangible (e.g. increase the visibility and awareness of WYD across every parish in our diocese/eparchy) or

intangible (e.g. foster a culture of encounter with Christ, the larger and local Church, and each other among participants).

Then, within each objective, identify a few **Key Performance Indicators (KPI)** that will serve as benchmarks of success and tools for measuring progress. These KPIs give you the action steps to ensure that work is being done toward the objective. They are also tools for evaluating your impact and success.

Example Objective:

Increase the visibility and awareness of World Youth Day across every parish in our diocese.

Sample KPI #1:

Create a parish resource packet for the week of WYD in August with prayers of the faithful, bulletin articles, website copy, and pulpit announcements to publicize the stateside celebration and to be distributed and used at parishes that week.

Sample KPI #2:

Increase participation in our local stateside World Youth Day celebration from prior years (if applicable).

Sample KPI #3:

Engages over 250 young adults from nearby parishes via a social media campaign that invites them to share stories, comments, or

short videos about Pope Francis, Lisbon, and the World Youth Day theme on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat.

Event Summary and Theme

Now that you have defined a target audience, considered your vision of success, and outlined some objectives to implement that vision, **write an event description** (three to five sentences). This statement will help you tell the ‘what’ of the event and effectively share the vision with others. This summary can be tweaked to be used on your website, social media, bulletin, and so forth. This is the “elevator speech” that one of your leaders can give to others about the stateside event.

Connected to the summary, it is also important to frame the event within a theme that unites many of the elements together. Along with the official World Youth Day theme, there may be concepts, principles, or values that are important to your local area or that define your goals and objectives that you may want to incorporate. For example, if your parish, campus, diocese, or eparchy has identified some key focus areas (e.g. outreach to the peripheries, marriage and family, etc.), you may want to integrate those into a local event theme.

These aspects can give shape to the activities and provide a focus for any speakers, artists, liturgical ministers, or event leaders that you invite. There may be significant events in the life and history of your local community that you could include, or Scripture passages or saints that are important to your parish, campus, diocese/eparchy, or movement. These are all helpful in making your stateside program distinct and special to the participants and leaders. Weaving together local themes with the international theme can give the stateside celebration a unique feel and make stateside pilgrims feel “at home.”

Collaborators

Just as your vision should begin with people, it should also conclude with people – in this instance, a collaborative leadership team. Who else should be collaborating on this? What other groups or organizations should be part of the core leadership team? Whether you are planning a parish, regional, or diocesan stateside pilgrimage, consider what individuals, groups, ministries, organizations, schools, etc. might be important to connect with. These may include leaders or volunteers from youth, campus, pastoral juvenil, and young adult ministries; vocation ministries; evangelization and outreach; family life ministries; cultural diversity ministries, and others within the parish, diocese, eparchy, or

community. These may also include outside organizations such as religious institutes, colleges and universities, apostolates, Catholic artists, publishers, fraternal networks, and media groups. Good collaboration starts at the very beginning of the planning process. Successfully planning and executing a stateside event is not possible without the shared investment and support of local collaborators. As you identify those groups and people, keep focused on the primary audience. Do not let a desire to collaborate widen the scope of the event so much that the focus is diluted. (Sometimes, if you try to reach everyone, you may reach no one.)

It is important to clarify what role you would like the other people and organizations to play in the process. For example, are you looking for people to help you craft the vision? If so, be sure to bring them on very early in the process. Are you looking for people to sponsor activities or provide logistical, financial, or administrative support? Be sure to clarify these questions from the beginning. Collaboration is a great way to provide a richer and more diverse celebration as well as to share the load of the financial, volunteer, and promotional resources needed. It also helps to add different strengths to your team and greater investment in the wider Catholic community beyond your own efforts.

LOGISTICAL ELEMENTS

Once the goals, theme, and collaborators are established, it is time to look at the basic logistic components of the stateside program.

Date and Time

Based upon the objectives you wish to accomplish for your stateside celebration, determine the best date and time for your event. Some key questions to consider:

- Many stateside events take place during the final weekend of WYD (in 2023, this is August 4-6). Will you do the same?
- What is the time difference between your local event and the international World Youth Day? If you want to watch the events in Lisbon live during your event, this may determine your plans.
- Since WYD technically lasts *multiple days*, will you have multiple activities (e.g. catechesis, stations, vigil, Mass, etc.) during your stateside program? Factoring the number of activities may determine if you are looking at a full- or half-day event, or an event over several days.
- Will you have an overnight option to mirror the overnight vigil at WYD?
- Since WYD 2023 takes place during the summer months in North America, what weather and community factors do you need to be aware of? How will you account for the hotter conditions, especially since many aspects of WYD are outdoors? What travel, holidays, local festivals and events, sunrise and sunset times, and already-existing parish or diocesan events should you consider?
- If you plan to develop a walking/riding pilgrimage or service project as part of your program, to mirror the journeying aspect of WYD, how will that affect the timing of your stateside celebration?
- Will you develop other digital opportunities for young people to engage the WYD events at home or on their mobile devices? Will you be communicating live with international pilgrims using digital technology? If so, that may also play into your timing.

See the sample schedules listed in this guide for additional ideas on how to structure your stateside event(s). These sample schedules can be adjusted to the needs and preferences of your planning team, the above considerations, as well as the site/location you have chosen.

Budget and Finances

Before final decisions about the event details are finalized, it is essential to know the budget with which you are working, as everything costs something. Some questions to consider:

- Is there a dedicated budget set aside for the event? If so, what is the amount that has been set aside? If not, where will you seek funding?
- Are there partner organizations, groups, collaborators, or private donors who may be able to assist with the event budget or provide material donations?
- Will you charge for the event? Will this fee only partially offset the costs or will cover all the costs?
- Will you bring in sponsors, exhibitors, or vendors to help offset costs (and in turn, provide them with a place to exhibit)?
- Will you provide partial or whole scholarships? Will you include this in your promotional materials? If so, how will you be able to fund such assistance?
- Is there an opportunity to fundraise for the stateside gathering in your local church or civic community?

- What are your diocesan/eparchial policies regarding fundraising?

Based on your primary and secondary audiences, also consider what organizations, ministries, schools and universities, religious institutes, and other groups would have a vested interest in being visible and involved at the event. Consider having significant aspects of the event (such as the site, the food and drink, music, entertainment, sound and lighting, equipment, and so forth) donated or funded by a partnering organization.

Create a realistic budget worksheet for this event and use it as the guiding document for team members in implementing the event plans. Practice responsible stewardship of the financial gifts made available to host a stateside WYD celebration show your gratitude to those who support it. In addition, fundraising within your church or civic community can also help market the event and raise greater awareness, which may also help with attracting the attention of participants and additional funding sources.

Schedule

The next step in the planning process is to identify components of the schedule and deciding when they fit into the overall timeframe you have established for the

stateside event. You may want to consider mirroring the those of the international WYD pilgrimage (see the most updated schedule at: <https://lisboa2023.org/en/participate/program>). Consider also how much time certain components will take, and how much additional time you will need to account for transitions, movements, and in case things happen to run over unexpectedly.

When thinking about those components, think about what might motivate the pilgrims in your community to celebrate WYD at home: meeting new people, being a part of a large-scale event, experiencing the universality of the Catholic Church, encountering the Pope, experiencing the same things as international pilgrims, understanding the heritage and culture of Lisbon, and so forth.

When developing the schedule, also consider whether you will be incorporating events of the international World Youth Day gathering via technology (such as live or recorded moments during WYD Lisbon), and how much time to allot for showing them (and setting up the technology).

Catechesis

During the international WYD pilgrimage, bishops from around the world offer catechetical sessions related to evangelization,

mission, and the theme (Lk 1:39). Consider offering at least one catechetical session as a part of your stateside pilgrimage, or include catechesis through breakouts on different topics. What catechetical topics would be most valuable for the young people in your area to hear about? What inspiring local or regional speakers could you invite to offer catechesis? How can the WYD theme be integrated into the local context and the reality of youth or young adult life in your area? Consider inviting your local bishop(s), if they are not attending the international event, as well as other key Catholic leaders in the area.

PLANNING TIP

Consider how opportunities for evangelization and catechesis can happen informally through conversation. Invite local priests, deacons, religious brothers and sisters, and lay ecclesial ministers to be present at the event to mingle with local pilgrims.

Prayer and Liturgy

During WYD, pilgrims are invited to set aside worldly distractions and set out on pilgrimage to encounter Christ, the Church, and other pilgrims. Even though your group may not be traveling far, consider how you can help your pilgrims enter a distinct time and space through prayer. Some of the most powerful

prayer experiences at WYD come at the end of the week: Stations of the Cross on Friday evening, a walking journey to the final liturgy site and an evening prayer vigil on Saturday, the Concluding Mass on Sunday. Are there ways that you can utilize technology to pray with the Holy Father and the international community live? Alternatively, could you record and watch portions of the international event? Seek to incorporate new prayer forms or moving images of faith as a part of the day. Consider holding a candlelight Mass or Eucharistic procession, praying with icons, venerating the cross, using multiple languages, etc. Be creative!

PLANNING TIP

Did you know there is an official World Youth Day cross and icon that travels the world in preparation for World Youth Day? Consider making a replica for your local celebration or using another significant local symbol of faith and sharing it around parishes in your Diocese in preparation for your local pilgrimage.

Another major component of the international gathering is the accessibility of the Sacrament of Reconciliation at various locations and on almost all the days of WYD. Invite several confessors to be part of your stateside event; you can either have a special

time on the schedule for reconciliation or make confession available throughout the program. Make sure confession guides are available for those who may need a refresher.

Music and Food

Music is a powerful tool for prayer and celebration that also serves to highlight the local culture of the WYD host country. In what ways can you highlight the music or cultural traditions of Portugal? Can you incorporate in some way the various WYD theme songs over the years? How can you also highlight the musical talent of your local community at the stateside event?

Consider featuring one of the songs from the World Youth Day Concluding Mass in the stateside Mass (if these songs are known beforehand), or use a devotional or traditional hymn from Portugal or Southwestern Europe. Every WYD also includes an official theme song composed in the language of the native country; it may also be available in several other languages. For World Youth Day 2023, the theme song is “Há Pressa no Ar,” or “There’s Rush in the Air,” which can be found online at <https://lisboa2023.org/en/lisbon2023>.

Another popular WYD song is “Jesus Christ, You Are My Life” by Fr. Marco Frisina (which has been used at all WYDs and other

Vatican celebrations of young people since 2000). Consider using these songs, past WYD theme songs, or a well-known Portuguese or Southwestern European hymn as a part of your local pilgrimage, in solidarity with the international pilgrims who will be singing these song during WYD Lisbon.

Food is another powerful way to enter into the international experience of WYD. Food is included in the international pilgrims' packets, and trying local cuisine is always a significant part of foreign travel. If you are offering food at the stateside event, consider offering a meal, dessert, or drink from Lisbon or the surrounding area (Portugal or Southwestern Europe). You could also feature foods specific to your own local area or cultural community. This is a great opportunity to collaborate with families, parish, or secular cultural groups in your area; it can also be a wonderful way to introduce the participants to the diversity of foods that exist around the world and in their own country. Food can be one of the most expensive parts of an event. As mentioned previously in the budget section, you will need to consider if you can provide food or how you will charge for it. Are there partners, collaborators, or donors who would be willing to provide food and drink for the event? Another option is making the stateside event a "potluck" event

whereby the participants bring a favorite or unique food of their own cultural heritage.

Walking and Camping

One of the longest-lasting traditions of the international WYD is the prayerful walk to the vigil site to camp out under the stars on the night before the WYD Concluding Mass.

These elements make World Youth Day stand out from other national or international events (or other Church-related activities); the walking and outdoor sleeping are probably the most memorable aspects of the WYD program. Is there a way to do something similar at your own stateside celebration? Can you incorporate the walking and camping aspects of WYD in some way? If the weather is not conducive to hiking or camping outdoors, are there alternatives that still give pilgrims a similar experience, such as indoor journeys or sleeping in an indoor facility?

PLANNING TIP

Consider hosting an outdoor walking Stations of the Cross in nature or at different sites or parishes in your city or community, weather permitting.

Technology

Effective utilization of technology during a WYD stateside pilgrimage can greatly deepen the connection between the international and

local pilgrimages. World Youth Day has recently embraced technology as a significant component of the preparation and execution of the event, including the usage of mobile apps and social media. Consider some ways to use technology at the stateside celebration:

- Incorporate a live-feed (or video/digital recording) of a WYD event in Lisbon.
- Utilize Skype, Face Time, Periscope, Zoom, or other video conferencing to talk with pilgrims from your area who are at the international WYD celebration (without distracting them from their own pilgrimage experience in Lisbon).
- Be active on social media using and searching for the WYD hashtags (#WYDUSA, #WYD, #WYD2023, and #Lisbon2023) on social networking sites. Share what you find and encourage your stateside pilgrims to participate and share updates. Develop your own event hashtag and use it in your promotional materials.
- Have stateside pilgrims use the official WYD mobile app on their devices.

Site Location

Based upon the audience, schedule, and budget, determine the best location to host the stateside event. Consider all the options

and secure your location as early as possible. You may want to have a few backup sites, if the initial plans fall through or if weather could be a limiting factor. To assist you with narrowing down the options for an ideal site for the stateside WYD celebration, consider the following questions:

- What nearby locations include a space or spaces that best accommodate the various components of your event schedule?
- What do your various location options cost? If a venue is free, will you still provide a stipend for set-up, cleaning, and other costs incurred by the venue?

PLANNING TIP

Consider a location that has a vested interest in reaching out to your youth or young adult audience or a community from which you can build a strong base of volunteers or audience to invite (i.e. university, retreat center, large parish, local shrine, etc.).

Also, this location may become a collaborator for this event, as well as future activities of your ministry.

- How will participants travel to your event? Is there sufficient parking? Is it accessible by public transit? Can people walk there?

- Are there enough bathrooms or other facilities available on-site or nearby? Will you need to rent portable toilets?
- What audience(s) would find it hardest to get to that location? Keeping this mind, how could you reach out to these people and encourage their participation, despite any obstacles that this location poses?
- Is the facility handicap-accessible? How can young people with disabilities fully engage in the stateside experience?
- Does the facility have a worship space capable of holding the target audience size that you expect? Does the facility have meeting, dining, gathering, or prayer areas that work with your size and program?
- What resources does the facility have for liturgy, audio-visual options, meal preparation and storage, etc.?
- If you plan to have a stateside gathering that includes movement (e.g. pilgrimage walk, traveling, etc.), does the facility allow for this to happen? What extra steps will be needed to accommodate movement?

Event Publicity

While World Youth Day is well-known among Catholic ministry leaders and some active Catholics in the community, it may not be for your target audience(s). The youth and/or young adults you are trying to reach may not even know what this event is all about. This means that a part of your marketing and publicity for the event needs to explain what WYD is, why it's important in the life of the Church (and young people), and highlight the aspects of the program (internationally or your own) that are the most compelling to youth and young adults.

PLANNING TIP

Always remember that the most effective marketing is personal encounter and invitation. How can you empower others to personally invite young people to the stateside WYD event?

You can also ask those in the local area who have been to a stateside or an international WYD event in the past to share their experiences as a way to inspire others to participate in a local pilgrimage. You can also ask your bishop, pastor, or other key Catholic leaders to promote the event in person or through digital promotions (e.g. have them record a video and share that on social media, or write an article or blog that you can post).

The primary question when designing your marketing materials is “What is the key draw for your target audience?” Some traditional answers would be: following the activities of the pope; seeing a favorite speaker/musician; experiencing Catholicism from a different culture; feeling a part of a large-Church experience; meeting new people; going to Mass with peers; being in solidarity with young people around the world, including youth and/or young adults from your parish, campus, diocese, eparchy, or country. Utilize the answer to this question in the choices you make regarding the language and images you use to promote the event – and consider how you would answer this question above and beyond the traditional responses. This may be something for your core team to wrestle with early in the planning process.

When marketing the stateside gathering, explore communication structures that exist already in your parish, region, or diocese/eparchy such as newspapers, websites, bulletins, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Ask yourself, “How can we ensure there is a presence on every local Catholic platform (bulletin, website, social media, newspaper, particular group email lists, pulpit announcements)?” What resources can you create to distribute to local parishes (event postcards, flyers, etc.)? Try to make it easy for

the parish secretary or others who coordinate church communications.

PLANNING TIP

Think big. Utilize an event like this to help lay the foundation for ministry growth in your parish, campus, diocese, or community.

Determine your big- picture spiritual and ministerial goals and allow World Youth Day to be a catalyst. For example, if you want small group ministry to take off, use the small groups during your stateside WYD celebration and plan a post-event small group series or other similar gatherings.

In all that you do for marketing and promotion, make sure it is high quality, well-presented, and clear/understandable to your audiences. Consider what images and words would be useful in promoting the event. Also consider what venues are best for marketing the stateside gathering with young people in your local community. If your target audience includes non-active Catholics, consider where they gather and receive information, which may be different than how more active young people get informed about upcoming events.

You may want to ask a young person (or a team of young people) to be your lead on the marketing. Is there someone in your local

community with the talents and resources to develop your promotional tools, especially youth or young adults who may be better connected to the wants/needs of their own generation? Consider inviting them into the process so that they can share their gifts with the Church through this stateside event.

Finally, never underestimate the value of one-on-one invitations. Ultimately, you are leading young people to an encounter with Christ, so personal invitations are key in this regard.

After the Event

Like many retreat experiences, once the “high” of this particular event wears away, it can be difficult to see or feel the effects. So much of the international experience of WYD is sharing the story and experience. It is also important to connect the stateside pilgrims with those who traveled overseas. You are highly encouraged to use the resources in this guide that keep challenging pilgrims in the weeks and months after WYD. This will help to encourage the young people to become missionary disciples.

Even though WYD does not occur often, it is important to offer people an opportunity to evaluate the event. You can either provide hard-copy evaluation sheets or offer a link to an online survey after the stateside gathering.

This will help you plan future events and pilgrimages and give you insights for the next WYD gathering. Perhaps the stateside celebration will even inspire your local community to host an annual celebration of young people. Strong feedback can help you make the case for such a development.

Overall, one of the key goals to any WYD experience, international or stateside, is to form and equip young missionary disciples. How can you continue to keep this at the heart of your follow-up efforts? Consider how you can connect stateside participants to spiritual directors, mentors, pastors, lay ecclesial ministers, religious men and women, or others willing to accompany young people. Consider how you can support their ongoing journey through faith formation, social justice and opportunities for service and charity, prayer and spirituality, and invitations to leadership in the community. Consider also how to draw attention to God’s call in their lives – and provide options for discernment of that calling, including introducing them to those committed to their vocations to marriage, ordained ministry, or consecrated life, as well as those who have been called to service in the Church as lay ecclesial ministers and through the lay apostolate. All of these methods are key to building up a community of missionary disciples in the Church today.

Spiritual Preparation

If the goal of a local WYD pilgrimage is to help young people encounter Jesus, then spiritual preparation before the stateside event is essential. However, it may also be difficult to do, considering many participants may just show up at the WYD event. Before and during the stateside celebration, provide moments for pilgrims (and potential pilgrims) to reflect on the idea of going on a journey. Through your ongoing ministry efforts prior to the stateside event, help young people see how the concept of pilgrimage is an important part of the Catholic experience.

If there are international WYD pilgrim spiritual preparation events in your area (like retreats, days of prayer, catechesis, and so forth), and if the international WYD organizer is open to it, consider extending the invitation to these programs to youth and young adults who may be planning to attend your stateside gathering. This may be especially important for any young people who are part of the stateside planning team. Consider gathering a group of young people regularly for prayer, catechesis, or community-building prior to your program, with a continued invitation to the stateside gathering in August 2023. Doing this will exhibit to the youth and young adults that pilgrimage is more than one-time events. In publicizing the event, consider offering

short moments of spiritual formation (prayers, Scripture verses, catechesis, explanations, etc.) for those who are considering attending.

The 2023 World Youth Day theme (Lk 1:39) is a great start, but also consider various Marian devotions (since WYD 2023 has a special connection to the Blessed Mother) or prayers with some of the intercessory saints and blesseds for World Youth Day.

You may also consider giving or making available to young people in your area the *World Youth Day USA Pilgrim Journal* written by the USCCB Secretariat of Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth (and available through the USCCB Store at www.usccb.org). The *Journal* is designed for both international and stateside pilgrims to use in the months leading up to, during, and following the WYD events in August 2023 – and includes prayerful reflections, information on the saints, and other insights for the WYD pilgrim.

Finally, consider your own spiritual preparation. Pray with the Lord about how he wants this stateside event to go. Let prayer inform and bolster all your preparation efforts and those of your planning team. Encourage others to pray for pilgrims and planners, and pray in solidarity with those attending the international World Youth Day events.

PREPARATION CHECKLIST

Six Months Away

- Form a planning team, collaborators, and begin regular meetings
- Identify the vision, target audience, objectives, and budget
- Collaborate with internationally-bound WYD pilgrimage leaders/teams/groups
- Set the date and a tentative schedule of events for the stateside gathering
- Request the local pastor, bishop, or other Church leader(s) to participate
- Visit and secure an event site (after reviewing several options)
- Book talent for event (musicians for Mass and or concert, speakers, emcee, etc.)
- Identify and begin to secure logistics: food, sound, lighting, technology, security
- Create save-the-date publicity materials

Four Months Away

- Create a detailed publicity and marketing plan for the stateside celebration
- Order and distribute publicity materials to parishes and ministry partners
- Identify a spiritual preparation plan to share with parish communities and with your collaborators

- Recruit the lead volunteers and managers
- Recruit priests, deacons, and religious to be present at event and for specific event responsibilities (confessions, vocation promotion, prayer services, Mass, etc.)

Three Months Away

- Begin publicity measures in earnest
- Reach out to local parish and diocesan communications office and local media
- Open event registration

Two Months Away

- Recruit more volunteers to assist the team leaders and managers
- Plan and host first volunteer training
- Purchase or make plans to purchase the major supplies for the event

Final Preparations

- Review all logistics and perform any test-runs of the logistical elements: food, security, sound, lighting, and technology
- Host final volunteer training
- Create printed materials, handouts, worship aid, etc. for the event
- Do a final site walk-through with the lead volunteers and managers
- Create an evaluation form or survey

The Week After the Event

- Collect the evaluations or send out online survey for event participants; set deadline for receiving feedback
- Hold a debriefing meeting with core team and lead volunteers
- Send thank you notes to significant volunteers, collaborators, leadership of the community (bishop, pastor, lay ministers, or others), assisting priests, deacons, and religious, site/venue contacts, vendors, service providers, and others who contributed to the stateside celebration
- Email stateside participants with further opportunities for them to get connected into ongoing ministries and the Church
- Begin preparations for a reunion event with stateside pilgrims and international

pilgrims (possibly with a vocational focus: what is God now calling you to say, to do, to be in life after World Youth Day?)

After the event, plans should be drawn up for continuing formation, evangelization, and mission opportunities for the pilgrims in the months that follow.

Consider developing additional checklists for these next steps. After a year has passed, assess the success of this event once more by measuring the involvement, investment, and actions of the pilgrims. Are they still engaged?

Look ahead to possibly hosting an annual gathering for youth and/or young adults, as well as a stateside celebration on the occasion of the next international WYD.

SAMPLE SCHEDULES

Stateside Model #1 (evening program)

This stateside celebration is a five-hour evening program coinciding with the WYD candlelight vigil, recreating elements of that event for local participants. While ideally suited for Saturday, this model can be used on any evening of the week with a live or recorded feed from the international activities.

6:00 pm Registration

- Refreshments
- Socialize with members of religious institutes and organizations

6:15 pm Catechesis

- Event welcome (by event organizers)
- Catechesis by speaker/bishop/pastor

6:45 pm Live Feed: WYD Prayer Vigil

- Live feed begins (or pre-recorded video) on large screen in an indoor hall/facility

7:00 pm Open Prayer Time and Dinner

- Option #1: Confessions at stations in the church, in portico, outside on benches
- Option #2: Rosary walk in grotto, led by religious sisters (offered every 30 min.)
- Option #3: Adoration in the chapel
- Option #4: Dinner with local priests, deacons, religious brothers, and sisters
- Option #5: Watch live feed in indoor hall
- Option #6: Church and grounds tours (offered every 30 min.)

8:15 pm Candlelight Procession

- Gather outside church
- Provide candles for each participant
- Process around grounds towards church

8:45 pm Evening Mass

- Celebrated by bishop or pastor
- Include a youth or young adult choir and liturgical ministers (pre-arranged)
- Use liturgical rites from (or similar to) the international WYD Closing Mass; use the WYD theme song

10:00 pm Coffee House and Music

- Concert, dancing, dance lessons, and/or other entertainment connected to the culture and traditions of international host country; i.e. Portugal

11:00 pm Event Closing

- Offer any final announcements
- Invite participants to continue journey beyond this stateside gathering
- Conclude with a short closing prayer

Stateside Model #2 (afternoon and evening Program, with optional overnight)

This stateside celebration is a twelve-hour program coinciding with the WYD candlelight vigil (on Saturday), recreating elements of that event for local participants. There is an overnight option.

There is also an optional Spanish track for each Catechesis Round. This program is ideally suited for the Saturday of the WYD week.

SATURDAY

2:00 pm Registration

3:00 pm Welcome and Opening Prayer

3:30 pm Break

4:00 pm Catechesis, Round 1

- Concurrent 60-minute sessions
- Offer between 3 and 6 workshops, depending on number of participants.
Include a Spanish track option

5:00 pm Break

5:30 pm Catechesis, Round 2

- Concurrent 60-minute sessions
- Offer between 3 and 6 workshops, depending on number of participants and including a Spanish track option

6:30 pm Dinner Break

- Meals, Exhibits, and Music
- Two-hour period around campus

- At 7:30 pm, encourage participants to travel to the Stations of the Cross site

8:00 pm Stations of the Cross and Candlelight Procession

- The first twelve stations should be projected or displayed in an area where participants would watch and follow along
- Candles should be distributed at the beginning of the Stations, but not lit yet
- Candles should be lit before or during the moment of silence during the twelfth station (Jesus dies on the cross)
- For the thirteenth and fourteenth station, at which time it should be dark enough, the candlelight procession would begin; at that time, participants would walk to the church or location of Evening Mass, holding their candles; Lenten songs can also be sung as participants process.

9:30 pm Evening Mass

- Celebrated by bishop or pastor
- Include a youth or young adult choir and liturgical ministers (pre-arranged)

- Use liturgical rites from (or similar to) the international WYD Closing Mass; use the WYD theme song

11:00 pm Cultural Entertainment

- Concert, dancing, dance lessons, and entertainment connected to the culture and traditions of international host country; i.e. Portugal

11:30 pm Overnight Campout

- Held at a nearby outdoor site, weather permitting (for those who stay overnight)

- Develop rules for the overnight camping option (i.e. what to bring, what not to bring, rules of conduct, etc.)

SUNDAY

7:30 am Morning Prayer

- Prayer service for overnight guests
- Include elements from international WYD

8:00 am Light Breakfast Available

- Limited to those who remained overnight

Stateside Model #3 (morning to evening program)

This stateside celebration is a twelve-hour program ideally situated on the Saturday of the WYD week. The program begins in one location and then pilgrims journey to another for the event.

10:00 am Registration

on the peripheries; hope for the future; youth and young adults; or pilgrimage

11:00 am Opening Remarks/Prayer

- Welcome those who are walking
- Give basic instructions on the schedule and walking route
- Introduce concept of pilgrimage, and the value of making a journey to another place
- Begin with an opening prayer service, with music and Scripture (related to pilgrimage)
- Close with a blessing of pilgrims

2:30 pm Break

3:00 pm Breakout Sessions

- Catechetical and/or prayer focus
- Participants choose three (3) sessions of 45 minutes each, with 15 minute breaks in between each session:

Session 1: 3:00 to 3:45 p.m.

Session 2: 4:00 to 4:45 p.m.

Session 3: 5:00 to 5:45 p.m.

11:30 am Walking Pilgrimage

- Depart for the site of the central activities
- The departure and arrival sites can be 60 to 90 minutes apart by foot (if you wish to make it longer, consider beginning an hour earlier with the registration/opening)
- Upon arrival, allow for a 30-minute break

6:00 pm Ministry Fair/Festival/Dinner

- A large festival/fair featuring representatives from colleges and universities with ministry and theology undergraduate degree programs; various ministries; apostolic movements and organizations; family life and vocation offices; local religious institutes; and collaborating organizations
- Representatives will be available to talk with participants throughout the evening
- Light dinner available to participants
- Pilgrims are invited to mingle with each other and visit the festival area

1:30 pm Opening Plenary Session

- Begin with prayer and welcome, especially for those unable to make the walk
- Keynote presentation
- Possible focus areas for keynote: Having faith like Mary; vocational discernment; the experience of the Church's Global South; solidarity with those in poverty and

7:30 pm Evening Plenary Session

- Re-gather with prayer/music
- Evening presentation
- Possible focus areas for the speaker: mission; missionary discipleship; evangelization; leadership; going forth into the world; social justice and charity

8:30 pm Team Time

- Individual parish, campus, or regional groups gather to meet and discuss: the next steps; how to implement the lessons learned into their local communities; and ways they individually will become

missionary disciples and say “yes” to the Lord’s call.

9:30 pm Final Mass/Closing Ceremony

- This Mass is ideally celebrated by a bishop or several priests from around the area
- Liturgy should also include elements (music, prayers, etc.) from international WYD Closing Mass
- Include youth or young adults in music and in liturgical ministries for the Mass
- Mass to conclude at approx. 11:00 pm (though an overnight option can also be included for those traveling far distances)

Stateside Model #4 (two-day overnight program)

This stateside celebration is two-day program with an overnight option, which would ideally be situated on the Saturday and Sunday of the World Youth Day week.

SATURDAY

9:00 am Registration

10:00 am Welcome & Opening Prayer

11:00 am Mass with the Bishop

12:15 pm Lunch

1:15 pm Plenary Session

- Begin with prayer and music
- Keynote presentation by main speaker

2:15 pm Break

2:30 pm Catechetical Session, Round A

- Workshops offered by local presenters; sixty minutes each
- Round A Theme: “GO” – with workshops on sub-themes including:
 - Understanding how the mission of Jesus relates to Christian vocation
 - Understanding how Jesus transforms us through sacraments and prayer
 - How evangelization and proclamation requires courage and resourcefulness

3:30 pm Free Time

- Options can include: sports and games; swimming; other outdoor activities based on site availability; time for prayer, reading, and/or private reflection

5:30 pm Dinner

- A concert or praise music can also be offered during the dinner break, allowing participants to listen while they eat

7:00 pm Plenary Session

- Begin with prayer and music
- Keynote presentation by main speaker

8:30 pm Adoration and Reconciliation

- Eucharistic adoration in the plenary space
- The Sacrament of Reconciliation may be offered during this time

10:30 pm Social

- The chapel will also be open all evening (10:30 am – 7:00 am) for quiet prayer
- Set curfew (i.e. midnight) when social activities should be finished

SUNDAY

7:00 am Morning Prayer

8:00 am Breakfast

8:30 am Catechetical Session, Round B

- Workshops offered by local presenters; should last sixty minutes each
- Round B Theme: “MAKE” – with workshops on sub-themes including:
 - Being missionaries of service
 - Being missionaries of catechesis
 - Being missionaries of love/joy

9:30 am Break

10:00 am Catechetical Session, Round C

- Workshops offered by local presenters; should last sixty minutes each
- Round C Theme: “DISCIPLES” – with workshops on sub-themes including:
 - What is Christian discipleship?
 - Growing as a disciple through healthy relationships, marriage, and family
 - Growing as a disciple through priesthood and religious vocations (to become “fishers of men”)

11:00 am Plenary Session: Pope Francis

- Watching Pope Francis’s homily (with translation) from the World Youth Day Concluding Mass in Lisbon
- Depending on the timing, this can be done live or recorded
- Emcees should introduce this segment

11:30 am Small Group Discussion

- Small groups gather in same space as plenary session (groups of 6 to 8 people) to reflect on the homily:
 - What do you remember most about the homily?
 - How did the homily connect to the theme of courageously saying “yes” to the Lord’s call and being faithful disciples?
 - What in the homily challenged you?
 - What in the homily comforted you?
 - What in the homily excited you?
 - What action steps can we take to respond to the Holy Father’s words in his homily?

12:00 pm Closing Mass with Bishop

- Young people to serve in the choir and as liturgical ministers at the Mass

1:00 pm Lunch and Closing

Stateside Model #5 (two-day overnight program)

This stateside celebration is two-day program with an overnight option, which would ideally be situated on the Saturday and Sunday of WYD week.

SATURDAY

11:30 am Registration

- Registration open until 1:30 p.m.
- Confessions, exhibitors, lunch, and music are available during this period

2:00 pm Opening Mass

3:30 pm Tents/Vendors Re-Open

- Dinner available 4:30 to 6:30 p.m.
- Participants have options to attend workshops, visit the exhibitors, or eat dinner

3:45 pm Breakout Session 1

4:30 pm Breakout Session 2

5:15 pm Breakout Session 3

6:00 pm Breakout Session 4

7:00 pm Concert

8:30 pm Holy Hour and Adoration

10:00 pm Evening Prayer and Candlelight Vigil

11:00 pm Rosary- Luminous Mysteries

NOTE: Eucharistic adoration is open all night

SUNDAY

6:30am Breakfast available (until 7:30)

8:00 am Morning Prayer with Bishop

9:30am Stations of the Cross

10:30 am Pilgrimage Walk

11:30 am Lunch Available (until 1:00 pm)

12:45 pm Concert and Papal Message

- Papal homily recorded from WYD Mass

2:00 pm Closing Mass with Bishop

Stateside Model #6 (short program on WYDUSA pilgrimage)

This stateside celebration is an evening program focused on a possible national pilgrim gathering for United States' pilgrims in Lisbon, recreating elements of that event for local participants. This evening program could be held during any morning or evening during the WYD week.

0:00 Registration

- Refreshments and Socializing
- Consider playing video or music from the WYD events in Lisbon as people arrive

0:30 Small Group Activity

- Break into small groups
- Image Search Activity: Have participants use the internet on their mobile devices to find an image that they feel best represents Catholicism in the USA
- Share the images with one another in the small group and discuss them

1:15 Large Group Catechesis

- One of the pastoral leaders can lead or facilitate a catechetical session focusing on Catholicism in the U.S., charisms of American Catholicism, saints and religious figures associated with the Church in the U.S., and/or ways to be an agent of social justice, inspired by the Scriptures and Tradition of the Catholic faith, locally and

nationally.

2:00 Recorded Video from Lisbon (if available)

- Pre-recorded* video for the WYDUSA National Pilgrim Gathering on large screen in indoor hall or gathering space (* if the gathering takes place prior to the WYDUSA event, consider showing video in the language that will best reach the hearts of your target audiences)

3:30 Large Group Discussion

- Leaders can facilitate a large group discussion focused on these or similar questions: What did you see and hear that was challenging or affirming? How did the gathering connect with our previous conversation about Catholicism in the U.S.? How can we hold the U.S. pilgrims in Lisbon in our prayers?

4:00 Closing Prayer

Stateside Model #7 (evening program)

This stateside celebration is an evening program that allows stateside pilgrims to watch video footage from that day's events at WYD in Lisbon, and brings them together for fellowship, prayer, and catechesis. This can be held any night of the WYD week.

6:00 pm Welcome & Registration

- Refreshments and socialization

- Solidarity (with the poor, refugees, immigrants, marginalized, etc.)

6:30 pm Pilgrim Catechesis

- This catechesis can be led by a pastoral leader (bishop, priest, deacon, religious, lay leader); it can also be a witness from WYD alumni or young people.
- If the number of participants is high, consider having multiple catechetical sessions (and have the participants choose the session that speaks to them)
- Possible catechetical sessions can include:
 - WYD 2023 theme (“Mary rose up and went with haste” [Luke 1:39].)
 - Pilgrimage, Encounter, and Celebration
 - Young people and their role in the Church and the world
 - The Life and Legacy of Saint John Paul II
 - The Cross (connecting to the WYD Cross and the Via Crucis)
 - Vocation (what does it mean to respond to God’s call?)

7:30 pm WYD Lisbon Video

- Show a moment from WYD Lisbon, or a compilation of several WYD events
- Pre-recorded video on large screen in indoor hall or gathering space
- If the video includes footage of a liturgical event such as a Mass, emphasize a spirit of reverence and respect

8:30 pm Candlelight Vigil Prayer

- Have a prayer service by candlelight, recreating the vigil with the Pope on the Saturday evening of the WYD events in Lisbon
- If time and space allow, consider beginning with a pilgrimage walk

9:30 pm Closing and Dismissal

- If time allows, late evening options can also include: rosary, coffeehouse, music, praise and worship, Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, or watching more video feed from Lisbon, or socializing
- Close by 11:00 p.m. with night prayer

Stateside Model #8 (interactive pilgrim communications)

This stateside celebration is focused on connecting stateside and international pilgrims through communications and technology. The timing of this event can vary – the pilgrims in Lisbon will be on Western European Standard Time so take this into consideration for scheduling. This model can also be adapted to fit stateside day-long or overnight gatherings.

00:00 Registration and Welcome

00:30 Large Group Conversation

- Discuss the concept of pilgrimage: What does it mean to be a pilgrim? What is the difference between the international and the stateside pilgrim experiences?
- Come up with talking points and questions for Lisbon pilgrims.

01:15 Interactive Conversation

- Connect with Lisbon pilgrims from your local community via technology
- Have them share details of their journey
- Ask the Lisbon pilgrims to pray for their stateside counterparts; let the Lisbon travelers know that they are being prayed for by stateside pilgrims

02:00 Small Group Conversations

- Discuss: What did you hear and see from the Lisbon pilgrims that inspired, challenged, or affirmed anything about your faith and about the concept of pilgrimage? What are your hopes for them? What are your hopes for others celebrating World Youth Day stateside?

02:30 Large Group Conversation

- Discuss the points made in small groups with the large group

03:00 Closing Prayer

OPTIONAL:

Consider also interacting with other stateside pilgrims across the U.S. during this gathering, asking them about their experiences; during an interactive session like this, pray with one another across the miles.

Stateside Model #9 (local pilgrimage journey)

This stateside celebration would ideally be situated on the Saturday of WYD week. The program begins in one location, and then pilgrims journey to another for part of the event, and then return to the first location. For this gathering, use the options provided in the WYDUSA Local Pilgrimage Prayer Guide, available at www.wydusa.org. There are options for prayers before entering, while visiting, and departing the pilgrimage location.

9:00 am Registration and check-in

9:30 am Daily Mass

10:30 am Depart for Pilgrimage

- **WALKING OPTION:** depart from one location on foot towards a local pilgrimage site; the site can be 60 to 90 minutes apart traveling by foot
- **DRIVING OPTION:** depart from one location by vehicle if the local pilgrimage site is farther away; the site should be within 60 to 90 minutes' drive.

12:00 pm Meal Prayer and Lunch

12:45 pm Pray at Pilgrimage Site

- Set up a tour if possible
- Visit those places at the site that connect to WYD in Lisbon, young people, or the Marian theme

4:00 pm Small Group Reflection Time

- See reflection questions in Prayer Guide

4:45 pm Closing Prayer Outside Site

**5:00 pm Return to Starting Point
(by WALKING or DRIVING)**

6:30 pm OPTIONS UPON ARRIVAL

- Group may disperse, or, if they remain together:
 - Dinner and socializing
 - Praise and worship, music performances, or coffeehouse setting
 - Evening prayer (vespers) and/or
 - Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament
 - Watching live or video footage of World Youth Day activities in Lisbon

Stateside Model #10 (local mission work)

This stateside celebration would ideally be situated on the Saturday of WYD week. The program begins in one location, and then pilgrims journey to another for part of the event, and then return to the first location.

9:00 am Registration and check-in

9:30 am Daily Mass

10:30 am Depart for Mission Activity

- **WALKING OPTION:** depart from one location on foot towards a local mission site; the site can be 60 to 90 minutes apart traveling by foot
- **DRIVING OPTION:** depart from one location by vehicle if the local mission site is farther away; the site should be within 60 to 90 minutes' drive.

12:00 pm UPON ARRIVAL: Lunch

12:30 pm Mission Project

- Choice of service or mission work is dependent on local needs
- Pray before beginning work

4:00 pm Small Group Reflection Time

- What was most challenging about this experience? What was most affirming?

- Where did you see/feel the presence of God in those we served, the people we encountered, and/or the work we did?
- Read Mt 25:31-46 and discuss “Lord, when did we see you hungry...?” as it relates to the missionary activity of the day
- How can we continue to serve on the peripheries beyond this one-time activity?

4:45 pm Closing Prayer at Worksite

5:00 pm Return to Starting Point (by WALKING or DRIVING)

6:30 pm OPTIONS UPON ARRIVAL

Group may disperse, or, if they remain together:

- Dinner and socializing
- Praise and worship, music performances, or coffeehouse setting
- Evening prayer (vespers) and/or
- Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament
- Watching live or video footage of WYD activities in Lisbon

World Youth Day Follow-Up: Connecting Stateside and International Pilgrims

The effects of a pilgrimage will be felt for some time after the journey is over. You should help participants engage in a type of “mystagogical” reflection on the journey. (Mystagogy is reflecting on the spiritual meaning of a sacred moment, like the formation that occurs following the Sacraments of Initiation).

It is also important to seek ways to build up relationships between stateside and international pilgrims.

Consider what took place following the experience of the Transfiguration: the saving mystery of the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of the Lord was yet to come, followed by the Lord’s Glorious Ascension and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The same goes for WYD pilgrims: as Jesus accompanied the disciples from Mount Tabor to Jerusalem, so too must stateside leaders accompany the participants after WYD and help them to be integrated into the life and mission of the Church.

Try to plan beyond the end of the event from the very beginning. Consider what take-aways you desire for the stateside pilgrims after their

local WYD pilgrimage experience. Here are a few pilgrim takeaways that can serve as indicators of a successful and fruitful event.

The Call to be Catholic

Part of being Catholic is recognizing that you are a part of something bigger than yourself. To be able to trace our origins back to Jesus Christ, the Twelve Apostles and original disciples, and to see the vast history and people of faith can be a humbling and exciting experience. WYD is a great moment to experience that reality of being Catholic.

Being part of a stateside experience can help remind a local pilgrim that he or she is a part of a universal (*catholic*) Church and that our God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, calls all people to a deeper connection and communion with him and others precisely through his Church. Just as the stateside pilgrim experienced an encounter locally, millions of other youth and young adults were experiencing an encounter with Christ in Lisbon and around the world.

A successful stateside gathering will open the eyes of local pilgrims to the vastness of the Church, and the joy and excitement of

belonging to a community that is over one billion people strong. Even though stateside events will not involve international travel, they can still have an international feel. A large Catholic gathering like this can help pilgrims to recognize that, despite differences in language, location, and culture, there is great unity in the traditions of the Catholic faith; one, holy, catholic, and apostolic.

The call to discover your mission

The primary theme of the international WYD in Lisbon should permeate the stateside experience. This theme, “Mary rose up and went with haste” (Lk 1:39) calls all people to understand Mary and to imitate how she stepped out in faith and embraced her unique vocation. There should be an emphasis at the gathering on God’s call to each participant to a special mission in this world. The event should help pilgrims to listen and open their hearts to hear how He is calling them to love.

The notion of God being constantly at work in our lives should challenge stateside pilgrims to reflect on how they may or may not be open to the Lord’s will in their relationships and encounters. They should be helped to see where they can make changes to become more courageous and faithful disciples.

The call to live in Christ

WYD invites pilgrims to embrace more deeply the call to live in Christ. In particular, two aspects of our relationship with the Lord might be fruitfully examined after WYD.

The first is the depth and closeness of the pilgrims’ relationship with God. Do pilgrims trust him as their Father, living as sons or daughters in the Son, and relying upon the Holy Spirit? The intimacy and personal connection with God that a pilgrim often feels during WYD may be sparked by a powerful moment(s) of prayer, praise, or connection to the community; a moment(s) where they experience the depth and fullness of the Father’s love for them. This feeling of intimacy with the Lord can last long after the WYD experience and help the pilgrim to make time for prayer and reflection, and live the sacramental life with more joy.

The second aspect is living out the pilgrim’s relationship with God in their day-to-day lives. The encounter with the Lord and the joy that comes from it are deeper than any momentary feeling and help provide direction for our day-to-day journeys. All are called to seek the Lord continually, to be open to and led by the Holy Spirit. Ultimately, this is about a graced response to the Great Commission (Mt 28:16-20). Pope Francis challenges all

people to “be missionary disciples and go to the peripheries” saying: “Each Christian and every community must discern the path that the Lord points out, but all of us are asked to obey his call to go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the ‘peripheries’ in need of the light of the Gospel.”³⁴ At World Youth Day in Krakow, Pope Francis noted that a missionary disciple, not a comfortable “couch potato,”³⁵ is what everyone is called to be. Pilgrims and leaders must go forth and share the Good News in every place and wherever people are gathered. Pilgrims of all experiences (international, stateside, or digital) are invited to go forth with the intention of sharing the love they experienced and inviting others to embrace the love God has for them. In inviting others to intimacy with the Lord, pilgrims can pass on what they receive at WYD, so that others may benefit from it.

These takeaways from the stateside WYD experience (the call to be Catholic, the call to discover your mission, and the call to live in Christ) can help participants share the fruits of this event with others.

Reflecting on the Experience

As part of the closing of the stateside experience, consider directing questions to pilgrims to help them reflect on their experience and consider how they will live it out. These questions can be given as a final group reflection at the stateside pilgrimage, to group leaders to talk about on the journey home, or offered as part of personal reflections or journaling. This reflection should be done while the experience is still fresh in the stateside pilgrims’ minds.

- What moment(s) from your stateside experience was most memorable?
- When did you feel God most closely or hear his voice during this event?
- What did you learn about God, your faith, your Church, or yourself through this stateside experience?
- Did anything you learn or experience during this event surprise you?
- Have do you think you changed because of this experience? Will you act any differently at home?
- Is there something you need to do or change when you get home?

³⁴ Message of Pope Francis for World Mission Day 2016, May 15, 2016.

³⁵ Pope Francis, Prayer Vigil with the Young People, XXXI World Youth Day, July 30, 2016.

GATHERING TOGETHER

One of the most important things to do after World Youth Day is to gather together those who traveled internationally with those who celebrated stateside. It reminds pilgrims that their experience is part of a larger journey that all young people across the globe were invited onto – and that, regardless of means, ability, or experience, all youth and young adults have been called to engage in this pilgrimage.

Similarities and Differences

We begin by looking at the similarities and differences between the stateside and international WYDs. If you are going to have stateside pilgrims in dialogue with those who went abroad, it is important to know what aspects of their experiences they may be able to discuss in a meaningful way.

More spiritual than physical

While the stateside pilgrim travels less than those who go overseas, the experience of pilgrimage is about the spirit of the journey. When prepared well, a WYD pilgrim should know that the movement of one's heart from one way of seeing God to another way is the most essential part of any pilgrimage. This internal movement can be a great place to start a discussion between stateside and international pilgrims.

Common language for all pilgrims

Stateside pilgrims can be encouraged to enter into the same mysteries and conversations leading up to their WYD experience as international pilgrims. For WYD 2023, this should start with the theme, “Mary rose up and went with haste” (Lk 1:39). This theme, chosen by Pope Francis, invites us to consider the way in which God calls us to rise up and respond to love others in our lives. It challenges all pilgrims to recognize the Lord's grace at work in our lives and to say “yes,” like Mary did, to God's will.

An experience that examined this theme gives pilgrims a great starting point to share their thoughts about vocation, discernment, missionary discipleship, and love. This common vocabulary will help pilgrims to connect with one another, as will references to saints and blessed such as St. John Paul II and Bl. Pier Giorgio Frassati. Additionally, both types of pilgrimages may feature the Holy Father in some way. Each group may have experienced catechesis, the Way of the Cross, a walking journey, singing the official WYD hymn, and/or attended a significant liturgical celebration. Finally, both groups may have received resources and tools (including the WYDUSA prayer or *Pilgrim Journal*) from the United States' WYD Office, and these can also be a unifying factor in the conversations.

Different cultural experiences

A stateside pilgrim will not have the same experience of a different culture as an international pilgrim, at least to the extent that can be gained by physically traveling to another country. At WYD, the culture is not only experienced through the host country (in this case, Portugal), but also through the various people that a pilgrim may meet from all over the globe. Stateside pilgrims may not have those kinds of encounters, but they may still be able to enter into dialogue and experience with people of other cultures. Many stateside events can include a cultural piece that celebrates the music, dance, and food of the international host country (Portugal), and in that experience, share with their international pilgrim counterparts what those cultural components meant to them.

In addition, there could be opportunities for stateside pilgrims to meet people from different cultural experiences in the United States. This diversity could be cultural (European, African, Hispanic-Latino, Asian and Pacific Islander, Native American), economic, or geographical or regional (East Coast, West Cost, Midwest, South, urban, suburban, or rural). There are many opportunities to engage with various populations which the pilgrims can discuss as a common point of reference afterwards.

Understanding how WYD is a celebration of catholicity (universality) helps leaders to better create an experience that prompts participants to reflect on their own culture and put it in dialogue with other cultures, all in the light of Christ and the Church community.

Understanding the degree to which stateside pilgrims are exposed to such diversity will be helpful in crafting this conversation with international participants. As you make plans for the stateside WYD celebration, it will be helpful if those cultural experiences were integrated into the programming – so that this can be a common point of reference for both stateside and international pilgrims.

CONNECTING COMMUNITIES

Immediate Follow-Up for Pilgrims

Any WYD (stateside or international) will need to process the experience on a variety of levels. Opportunities for small group conversations and reflections, journaling, and quiet prayer are highly encouraged.

At the conclusion of WYD, pilgrims should be reminded that they are expected to share their experience with their community (family, friends, parish, diocese/eparchy, campus, workplace, or movement). This could be done by writing reflections; sharing via social media;

preparing a formal or informal presentation for parishioners, ministry groups, or Catholic events. This can be incredibly helpful for both stateside and international pilgrims as they transition back to everyday life.

There may be some mixed feelings between the stateside and international pilgrims regarding this sharing process. Some stateside pilgrims may believe that, because they did not participate in the international pilgrimage, they do not have much to say. Some of the reasons that people did not travel to Lisbon can become obstacles in reflecting on their experience. There are many reasons that people do not travel for WYD, including lack of funds, a complicated immigration status, busy schedules, work, personal, or academic commitments, or a physical impediment. Any of these reasons could present a challenge for stateside pilgrims to appreciate the experience of the international pilgrim, and vice versa, and may struggle to get the most from an encounter with the other pilgrims.

One way to navigate this potential difficulty is to highlight the joys and blessings that came out of the stateside experience. Once a stateside participant has developed a better understanding of the meaning of the experience for themselves, they can better

appreciate that the Lord has sought them out and touched them where they were.

Preparing for Sharing

Depending on when your international pilgrims return, it may be easier to gather stateside pilgrims alone first, before intentionally interacting with other pilgrims. If so, use this unique time to discuss what the stateside pilgrims have carried with them since their local WYD experience and how they plan to share that with the rest of the community and their peers. Having them work together on a presentation or gathering pictures for a slide show can be fun ways to remember and reflect. This reminds participants that their journey continues and that they, too, are WYD pilgrims.

The Sharing Experience

There are a variety of ways for international and stateside pilgrims to connect and share their experiences of World Youth Day. Some things to keep in mind:

- Timing is key. Most stateside pilgrims will head home immediately following the event, but international pilgrims may be visiting additional sites after WYD is over. Planning a gathering as soon as international pilgrims return can be

challenging; however, hosting an event within one to three weeks is highly recommended. This is something that can be pre-planned before WYD arrives.

- Provide an opportunity for each group to share their experiences with enough time and space to allow for good dialogue.
- Consider this meeting an opportunity to celebrate and rejoice in the Lord's goodness and grace, to pray together, and to recommit to a more intense life of missionary discipleship and attention to the young Church that gathered for World Youth Day. This can mean integrating a Mass or prayer service into the meeting.
- Remember that some sharing may have already happened via social media. Both groups of pilgrims may be posting on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram during the WYD week, so many stateside pilgrims will have already seen and heard some of the international pilgrims' stories.

Consider having the stateside pilgrims share first about their experience when you gather both groups together so that their experience is not overshadowed by more dramatic ones (which may happen with international stories).

As the discussion goes on, have the pilgrims consider what next steps they can take as a community of missionary disciples.

When speaking to those gathered, support the development of a spirit of solidarity and unity among the pilgrims. Incorporate the broader understanding of pilgrimage and community (see above) and frame the event as one celebration, with prayer, service, mission, and shared recommitment to the Gospel.

Since the Holy Father has called for a Marian focus for the 2023 WYD, both groups can reflect on their love and appreciation for Our Lady and how it was fostered by WYD. The Virgin Mary will be a powerful connector of the groups' experiences. Both groups can consider their shared mission to respond in service of others, as Mary did.

SAMPLE SHARED GATHERING

This outline is one possible structure for bringing the international and stateside pilgrims together. The times shown here reflect the number of minutes from the beginning of the event.

0:00 Gather and Hospitality

0:10 Welcome

Given by a bishop, pastor, or lay leader common to both groups.

0:15 Community Building

Consider a familiar activity or icebreaker from WYD or one that is familiar to the community

0:30 Song and Prayer

Use the official WYD hymn (in English, Spanish, or your language of choice) and the “World Youth Day Prayer for the United States” (both are online at www.wydusa.org).

0:45 Recap of Experiences

Have a person from each group present a recap of their experiences (Optional: pictures, videos, songs, etc) and share personal reflections.

1:15 Small Groups and Reflection

Break into small groups of four or five; try to have an equal mix of WYD stateside and international pilgrims. Spend at least 30 to 45 minutes in the small group setting. You can also give the pilgrims time to reflect on these questions alone prior to forming small groups. Use the questions provided below (or similar ones) and ask the stateside and international pilgrims to discuss what WYD meant to them, what the experience has done for their faith lives and relationship with God, and what they plan to do next.

- What moment(s) from your journey was most striking or memorable?
- When did you feel God or hear his voice most closely during my pilgrimage experience?
- What did you learn about God, your faith, the Church, or yourself through this pilgrimage?
- Did anything you learn or experience during the pilgrimage surprise me in any way?
- Have you changed in any way because of this experience?

- In particular, what did you learn at WYD about the theme (Lk 1:39)?
- Is there anything from your World Youth Day experience that has made you feel closer to others? To God? To the Church?
- Do you know yourself better because of World Youth Day?
- How can you help other young people be attentive to the voice and will of God in their lives?
- How can you be more open to God's will/voice in your own life?
- Is there something you need to do or change in your everyday life?
- Is there any action you must take in response to what you saw, learned, and felt at WYD?

2:00 Large Group Sharing

Have groups share insights with everyone; consider concluding this

session with an encouragement to all participants to go forward in solidarity as one community of pilgrims, ready for missionary discipleship.

2:30 Closing Prayer

Consider praying the Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary, reading the Great Commissioning (Mt 28:16-20) or the Emmaus Story (Lk 24:13-35), and praying again the WYD Prayer as the closing of the gathering; alternatively, a Mass of Thanksgiving might be offered and/or some time for prayer and adoration before the Blessed Sacrament.

3:00 Optional meal

Consider having a meal together with Portuguese, Southwestern Europe, and/or Iberian food, a potluck, or a food particular to the local community or group.

Vocational Discernment Gathering for World Youth Day Pilgrims

WYD has a growing impact on the vocational discernment process of youth and young adults, as evidenced by annual studies of those in seminary or religious life.³⁶

The WYD experience helps young people prayerfully consider what God is calling them to do with their lives. This year's theme of calls to mind how Mary's love of God encourages her to act in love of neighbor. Thus, vocational discernment is a perfect fit for a day that brings together stateside and international World Youth Day pilgrims.

The word "vocation" here is understood in the broadest sense of God's call in a person's life. It encompasses the states of life (vocations to the priesthood, diaconate, religious/consecrated life, and marriage), as well as the calls to attend a particular college or university, engage in various forms of service or extracurricular activity, or looking towards particular occupations or careers.

Gathering Activities

Begin the gathering with team building and icebreakers, giving participants the opportunity to get to know each other. This event should be open to both stateside and international pilgrims.

Discernment Exercise

Plan an activity to help the pilgrims engage in the discernment process – to help them better understand what discernment is, how the process works, and ways they can practice discernment. Making choices through prayer and reflection is an important skill for any young person to develop. It is especially important when they are considering many options regarding their future and wondering where God may be leading them.

It may be ideal to invite a local vocations director (for the diocese/eparchy or from a local religious institute) to lead a discernment activity for the young people, or to help plan it. Below is an outline of a discernment exercise that may be used:

³⁶ USCCB Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations: *Profession Class 2014 Report*, p. 17; Ordination Class 2015 Report, p. 25; <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/vocations/consecrated-life/profession-class/upload/Profession-Class-2014-report-FINAL.PDF>;

and <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/vocations/ordination-class/upload/Class-of-2015-report-FINAL-V2.pdf>

You will need:

- The Bible
- Paper and pens for everyone (or ask them ahead of time to bring a journal, especially if they kept one at WYD)
- An altar or an offering bowl

Start with an opening prayer that invokes the Holy Spirit or that utilizes the Pentecost reading (Acts 2:1-11).

Prayer to the Holy Spirit

All: Come, Holy Spirit,
fill the hearts of your faithful.
and kindle in them the fire of your love.
Send forth your Spirit
and they shall be created.
And you will renew the face of the earth.
Leader: Lord, who by the light of the Holy Spirit instructed the hearts of your faithful, grant that by the same Spirit, we may be truly wise and ever rejoice in your consolation.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.³⁷

Using the questions in the previous section, give the pilgrims a chance to write about their WYD experience and to reflect on where and how the Lord might be calling them to courageously step forward in faith, especially

in regard to their vocation, career, relationships, studies, etc. This could be set up by a discussion about discernment and Pope Francis's message about the theme of Mary's visit to Elizabeth from Luke 1:39.

Next, do a guided meditation or *Lectio Divina* with the focus on vocation, acknowledging need for the Lord's guidance, praying for others in our lives who need the Lord's guidance, and how to act on these needs.

After the meditation or *Lectio Divina*, ask:

- What images did you see?
- How did you feel?
- What do the concepts of vocation and discernment mean to you?
- How has the Lord's call been manifest in your life in the past?
- Are there certain relationships you need to seek out or from which you need to step back?
- Is there someone (or a group of people) on the periphery whom God is calling you to love?
- Where can you be a witness of God's love in the world now?
- How do you see yourself witnessing to God's love in the future?

³⁷International Committee on English in the Liturgy, Inc.
"Prayer to the Holy Spirit" from *A Book of Prayers*.

- What might the Holy Spirit be calling you to be or do with your life?
- Have your plans changed since WYD? If so, how?

Ask them to write down some ideas of what their future might look like, focusing on how they can be generous with the Lord. Ask them to write a petition to God for clarity. Invite the pilgrims to pray for one another and support each other in their search for meaning and purpose. Remind them that God's call always contains a call to sacrificial love in action, witnessing to Christ's sacrificial love on the Cross. There is no "easy" path.

Conversation: Vocation

After this exercise, include time to discuss the notion of vocation. Discernment leads to clarity around one's vocation in life –what God calls each of us to do with the life he gave to us. Share how WYD has helped guide young people in the past to discover what God was calling them to.

Ask pilgrims how their vocations to a state in life (priesthood, consecrated life, and marriage) or vocations of service became clearer to them through WYD. Ask if the events confirmed or changed any previously-held thoughts on these vocations or callings. Ask if WYD made them more open to the

possibility of pursuing these vocations more intentionally and, if so, what they are considering doing in response. Allow time for the group to share with each other. The goal is to spark conversations that open the pilgrims' minds and hearts to the possibilities before them, not to push anyone into discerning one thing or another. The conversation should also encourage a greater awareness of the Lord's call each day of our lives, for it is in being faithful to the "little" calls of the Holy Spirit that a person will more easily discern the "big" life-changing ones.

Activity: Vocations Panel

This discussion and Q&A activity will encourage WYD pilgrims to reflect on the call to a particular state in life. The goal is to help pilgrims realize that *everyone* has a vocation, and *some* people are called to a way life that is extraordinary (in the true sense of the word: above or beyond the ordinary baptismal call to follow Christ). Pilgrims may have interacted with consecrated religious in their stateside experience in a new way and this is a chance to think about their future state in life.

Assemble a panel including one or more of the following: a married couple; a religious brother and/or sister; a priest; a deacon; a lay ecclesial minister; a single lay person discerning and living out God's call in a

particular form of work or service. It would be good if all or some of the panelists have been to (or were inspired to their vocation through) a stateside or international WYD, but this is not a requirement.

PLANNING TIP:

If you cannot find people to represent particular states in life for your panel, consider using online resources like video testimonials and websites; share these links with the pilgrims.

USCCB (Religious Women)

www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/vocations/discerning-women/

USCCB (Videos on Vocations)

www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/vocations/videos.cfm

USCCB (For Your Marriage)

www.foryourmarriage.org

VISION Vocation Network

www.vocationnetwork.org

Vocation Placement

www.vocationsplacement.org

Begin by having the panelists ask the pilgrims the following questions:

- What brought you the most joy during your WYD experience?
- Where did you see joyful people at WYD?
- What makes you happiest in daily life?

After discussing these questions, have a panelist or the leader invite the pilgrims to think about what their lives would look like if they were always doing what makes them happiest or most fulfilled. Take note of the different responses so that you can come back to them later in the discussion.

Then have the panel share their own experiences (of WYD, or how they found joy and happiness in similar events, and/or in their respective vocations) and how they discovered what God was calling them to. Leave time for questions and dialogue.

If time allows, invite the pilgrims to take time for reflection (e.g., take 15 to 20 minutes for silent reflection), and if you feel it is appropriate, allow them the opportunity to complete an online discernment test. There are a variety of these available online. You may also let the pilgrims know about other online resources and videos for discernment that highlight the journeys of religious men and women, priests, and married couples.

At the end, bring the conversation back to the large group and ask whether the pilgrims have gained any additional insights. Ask the group to identify how the members of the panel recognized God's call and, like Mary, embraced God's will. Ask the young men and

women present if they are considering new possibilities (and open to sharing). This sharing should be held in confidence and the pilgrims should be encouraged to pray for each other.

Closing Prayer

End this session with a prayer for God's will to be done (and conclude with the Lord's Prayer). If time allows, consider a longer prayer using the patron saints and blessed of WYDUSA (Consider printing out short bios and photos of these holy men and women):

Leader: Each of the guiding patrons of World Youth Day were called by God to something great. Choose one of the saints or blessed below to spend ten minutes with today, asking them to pray for your discernment process.

Consider the following:

St. Anthony of Padua

born in Lisbon, entered religious life as a teenager and became a distinguished Franciscan preacher.

St. Vincent

was imprisoned, tortured, and killed for his Christian faith in the fourth century – he is the patron saint of Lisbon.

St. John Bosco

was a priest that dedicated his life to the betterment and education of street children – he founded the Salesians of Don Bosco.

Bl. Joana of Portugal

daughter of a king, she rejected many suitors to be the “spouse” of Jesus Christ at 20 years old– she died at 38 after devoting her life to penance and service of the poor.

St. Bartholomew of Martyrs

born in Lisbon, a Dominican, bishop, a participant of the Council of Trent – he is acclaimed “father of the poor and sick.”

Bl. Chiara Badano

is remembered for her ability to integrate the Gospel into her daily life and joyful acceptance of redemptive suffering.

Bl. Carlo Acutis

a computer genius, used his gifts to share the news of Eucharist miracles – died of leukemia shortly after diagnosis offering his life to God.

St. John Paul II

was the Holy Father of the Catholic Church for 26 years – he founded World Youth Day, traveled the globe more than any pope in history, and was an advocate for young people in his priesthood, episcopacy, and papacy.

The Blessed Virgin Mary

under many titles and the object of devotion to the people of Portugal; she faithfully consented to being the Mother of God – and our mother – when she said “yes” to the Lord’s call through an angel.

Leader: Which of these holy men and women do you want to accompany you in prayer as you discern the various paths laid out before you? Take about ten minutes to learn about the person you chose, speak with them in prayer, and ask for their guidance and intercession. When you have finished, come back to the large group.

(OPTION: if time allows, participants may share their saint with one other person, with a small group, or with everyone gathered)

At this point, the leader can conclude the gathering with the World Youth Day Prayer for the United States (see next page), a litany of the many titles of the Blessed Virgin Mary, especially in Portugal/Europe, and/or an invocation of the patrons of World Youth Day 2023 and the patrons of pilgrims from the United States, before a final benediction and blessing by a bishop, priest, or deacon, if circumstances allow.

God our Father, be with us
on our pilgrim journey of faith.
Give us the grace and courage
to step forward in faith and hope
on the road ahead.

Open our eyes to see your face
in all those we encounter.
Open our ears to hear your voice
in those who are often ignored.
Open our hearts that we might be
faithful disciples of mercy and truth.

Transform us. Empower us
to give of ourselves to the poor;
to welcome the lost;
to forgive those who hurt us;
to comfort those who suffer
and are marginalized.

Bless those who travel
from the United States of America
to Lisbon, to join the universal
Church for World Youth Day.
Bless, too, those who celebrate stateside,
united in faith and joy.

Like the disciples who journeyed
up the mountain to witness the
Transfiguration, may this experience be
an encounter that strengthens us
for our work in the world.

Through the intercession of Mary,
the Immaculate Conception,
patroness of our nation,
may we be worthy witnesses of our faith,
humble representatives of our country,
and inspired missionaries bringing peace,
hope, and mercy into our communities.

We ask all this through Christ Our Lord.
Amen.

St. Anthony of Padua, **pray for us.**

St. Vincent, **pray for us.**

St. John Bosco, **pray for us.**

Bl. Joana of Portugal, **pray for us.**

St. Bartholomew of Martyrs, **pray for us.**

Bl. Chiara Badano, **pray for us.**

Bl. Carlo Acutis, **pray for us.**

St. James the Apostle, patron of
pilgrim travelers, **pray for us.**

St. Kateri Tekakwitha, young faithful
witness from our native land, **pray for us.**

St. Thérèse of Lisieux, patroness of
missionaries, advocate for youth, **pray for us.**

Bl. Pier Giorgio Frassati, patron of young
adults, man of the beatitudes, **pray for us.**

St. John Paul II, founder and patron
of World Youth Day, **pray for us.**