

# World Youth Day 2008

Bishop Peter J. Cullinane DD

**5 September 2006**

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

When Pope John Paul II instituted World Youth Day (WYD) he described it as 'The Church's day for youth and with youth'. On Palm Sunday 1986, young people from every race and culture made a journey of faith, a pilgrimage, to meet with others and join in a week long celebration with John Paul II in Rome.

Since then, it has attracted massive crowds in Buenos Aires (Argentina), Santiago de Compostela (Spain), Czestochowa (Poland), Denver (USA), Paris (France), Rome (Italy), Toronto (Canada) and Cologne (Germany), and in 1995 in Manila attracted the largest crowd ever gathered in human history - 4.5 million people attend the final mass.

World Youth Day, Sydney, 2008, is the first ever to be held in Oceania. It is an opportunity for the Church in New Zealand and in this entire region to experience how the faith of others can inspire our own faith. At their recent meeting in Suva, the Bishops' Conferences of Australia, Papua-New Guinea, Solomon Islands, the Pacific Islands and New Zealand decided to make WYD a joint project.

There are three distinct parts to WYD that we will be directly covering in our preparation and organising:

1. Days in Diocese - Hosting 'Days in the Diocese'. Alongside our young people taking part is the opportunity for our pastoral areas, parishes and schools to extend hospitality to young people from every continent journeying towards Sydney.
2. Days of Encounter - 'The pilgrimage' of young people aged 16-35 to Sydney in July 2008. Thousands of young people throughout New Zealand fundraising, working and preparing for a pilgrimage such as this could have a profound and lasting effect in our parishes and schools.
3. Days of Faith Following on from this major event will be the opportunity for us in NZ and in our diocese to reflect on the experience of World Youth Day and reap its fruits and keep them alive.

What must we do? In your parish - Begin NOW

- Appoint a parish World Youth Day contact person
- Establish a parish or regional WYD Committee
- Begin to pray for WYD and our young people at Masses and in our homes and schools
- Begin to work out how you can host pilgrims from around the world
- Begin to support and encourage young people to attend WYD Sydney in 2008
- THINK BIG, BE GENEROUS

The theme for World Youth Day 2008 is You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses. May our diocese be a place of pilgrimage and may many of our young people become witnesses to the ends of the earth.

This weekend marks the official beginning of our journey; it's going to be big. Be in.

P J Cullinane

Bishop of Palmerston North