

Pastoral fruits of the Days in the Dioceses in Poland

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I am very weak in Church poetry, so I have prepared some very concrete points. I will present pastoral fruits of Days in the Dioceses in Poland.

But First, I would like to thank fr. Grzegorz Suchodolski, my predecessor ,senior director. Without his titanic work during many, many years, WYD in the whole of Poland couldn't have taken place. The cooperation between all dioceses was possible, because we, as a country, had such a good coordinator. I remember preparatory time to Madrid, Rio, and after that – to Cracow. I have noticed, that preparation is a process, not an act. And this is not only to say: glory be to Father Grzegorz. This is to say thank You and to emphasise that this is the unity which is extremely necessary during whole preparatory process. And the unity between all Polish dioceses is one of the most significant fruits of Days in the Dioceses (DID).

In my speech I am going to present a very pastoral point of view in a few points:

1. Days in the Dioceses were a really great experience for the whole Polish Church.

Not only for the Youth, but for all of us. It means, that during preparatory process and during DID a very large number of people was working for our guests and our communities. For example – families were preparing their houses to host young pilgrims from all over the world, priests were preparing spiritual programmes, pastoral meetings etc. based on WYD, bishops were talking a lot about young people, young people became a part of the preparation process – not only the co-operators for priests, sick people were praying for WYD, local governments felt, that it was a vital thing and a chance for them too.

2. All Dioceses had their own biblical name.

Currently those names are, very frequently, the names of diocesan youth centers. According to this fact, many Polish dioceses created their own logos. It was a crucial point on their way to WYD, because it helped them to unite around this idea. Of course, in their minds they had Central events and an official logo. Those biblical names were very useful, when we have started to prepare a programme for Days in the Dioceses.

3. We felt, that Days in the Dioceses are not an addition to WYD Central Events, but an integral part of them.

Soon after Pope Francis announced subsequent WYD in Cracow, lots of young people asked – how could I help? What could I do in my diocese, in my parish? Obviously, the first problem was, that it was impossible to move the whole country to Cracow. And it was obvious, that the Archdiocese and young people from Cracow were responsible for preparation process of WYD Central Events. From the first days all dioceses started their preparation to DID. Everything was coordinated by National Office for WYD, but it was only a coordination – we, as the dioceses, could have created our own programmes, connected to our biblical names. It was a great chance for young people, for their creativity and ideas. They tried to prepare everything for our guests from different cultures and parts of the world in the best possible way. We tried to inform parishes, from which country or which language pilgrims they would host. It was a stimulus to start learning those languages, to talk about the culture, to organise some meetings about guests' country before they had arrived. Now we know, that it was a very essential experience for Polish Church and for our guests.

4. The preparation was very meaningful to us.

We have had a special programme for the Youth at the national level for three years. In parishes, dioceses, we were trying to congregate all people and we were asking them to prepare those meetings (DID and WYD). I have always said, DiD and WYD are not the events. They constitute a point, a mile stone. We worked with families who decided to invite guests. In many dioceses we had much more host families than guests – and it was a real problem for us.

4. In many Polish dioceses, now, after DID we have diocesan structures of Youth Ministry.

It is a very vital fruit after DID and WYD. We were afraid, that after those meetings everything would be closed and everyone would come back home. The last person would switch the light off... But it is not true. Of course, in some dioceses and parishes it was a sad end. Many people were tired and said 'enough'. But in many parishes groups of volunteers, young people, families decided to continue, to grow this experience in a new way. How? Many foundations and societies were created. Young people asked their priests 'let's do something more', they created groups for volunteers, prayer groups, choirs and music bands, preparatory groups to Panama. We can say, that after DiD and WYD in Cracow World Youth Day became a part of our normal pastoral work focused on young people.

In some dioceses bishops announced local Synods of Youth or created diocesan youth councils

5. Now we do have very well - prepared leaders and volunteers. The cooperation between priests and lay people is led by over 40.000 volunteers. Now they are working in their parishes, but some of them decided to work at the diocesan or national level. These days we have strong groups of young leaders ready to work for God and His Church in all dioceses, with their experience and their ideas.

A very interesting thing constitutes the fact that some former volunteers of WYD are currently working for diocesan or national catholic institutions (diocesan offices, medias etc.) WYD volunteers, especially coordinators, are very good workers and they don't have many difficulties in finding a new job. We can say, that WYD and DiD created a large number of professional workers.

6. We can see, that numerous church communities (in our parishes and dioceses) have woken up. This is a kind of new life for them.
7. Polish Young people have understood, that we have beautiful country, with amazing history and very rich spirituality.

DiD were a very good opportunity to learn about our homeland. About its history, culture and spirituality. It was really great to discover how great and amazing is our country. When our guests arrived, we were trying to show them many things, to tell a lot about our difficult history, about our rich culture. It was a really amazing experience, when we have seen young people from different countries being very surprised and amazed.

8. Young People from my country understood better what 'catholic' means.

We hosted people from many countries, continents, cultures. With different skin colours, languages, spirituality. But we saw, that all of us are in one, Catholic Church. It was amazing, when we could see some liturgical dances from Wallis and Futuna Islands, Ghana or other cultures and countries. During Days in the Dioceses we felt, that we are one Church.

9. Now we can observe, that Young people are visiting guests in their countries.

I am very happy because of that – after WYD in Cracow we can still share our faith and be in touch. In many cases this is a start of new kind of pastoral work – international, between parishes and dioceses. Now, before Synod, it is a very good occasion to share good practices.

10. The experience of Eastern Catholic Churches

It was very typical for WYD in Cracow, that even during Days in the Dioceses we had lots of pilgrims from Eastern Catholic Churches, especially from Greek - Catholic Church. For many people it was the first time, when they could meet married priests e.g. from Ukraine, they could spend time with their children. But much more crucial was to feel Eastern spirituality, liturgy and to pray together in one, Catholic Church. According to Ukrainian pilgrims a very significant fruit of DiD and WYD was the experience of difficult situation in Ukraine.

11. Getting new people for work

Now in our parishes, communities, movements etc. we have some people, who decided to cooperate after DiD and WYD. Many young people say: let's do something together. Now we are looking for new ideas and trying to start up some new pastoral projects at the national, diocesan and parish level.

12. Knowing about spiritual life

Most meaningful fruits are hidden in people's hearts. We saw many confessions, prayers, Masses... We observed people's faces. Personally, I was talking to and confessing a lot of young people before, during and after DiD and WYD. I strongly believe, that God's seed will bring blessed fruits.

In those points I was trying to describe some pastoral fruits of Days in Dioceses. I believe I have not written everything. Now we are on our way to the Synod and to Panama. I trust that during this journey we will use our experience and we will be growing in faith and grace. Thank you for your attention.