



DICASTERIUM
PRO LAICIS, FAMILIA ET VITA

Press Conference “On our way to Seoul WYD 2027”

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Good morning everyone and thank you for being here today!

The Holy Father has chosen the city of Seoul, Korea, as the venue for the next World Youth Day in 2027. During the previous WYD which was held in Lisbon, Portugal, young people from all over the world went on pilgrimage to the western border of Europe, and now they are being asked to set out for the Far East as ‘a marvellous sign of the universality of the Church and our dream of unity’, in the words of the Holy Father.¹

The Church in Asia and Korea

After World Youth Day in Manila in 1995, it now returns to Asia, the ‘cradle of the world's major religions’, with its ‘intricate mosaic of its many cultures, languages, beliefs and traditions, which comprise such a substantial part of the history and heritage of the human family’ as St John Paul II said in his Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*.²

World Youth Day is a wonderful opportunity for the local Church to celebrate its distinct culture and faith together with other Churches. In Korea, Catholics make up 11% of the population. Although a minority, the Church is full of vitality and initiatives of all kinds. It is enriched by the heroic witness of so many martyrs, and it continues to radiate, very strongly, a light of faith and hope that reaches all believers in every part of the world.

¹Angelus, Apostolic journey of Pope Francis to Portugal on the occasion of the 37th World Youth Day, *Parque Tejo* (Lisbon), Sunday, 6 August 2023.

² John Paul II, Post-synodal exhortation, *Ecclesia in Asia*, no. 6.

So, what does World Youth Day offers to youth of today? First of all, WYD in Korea, like every WYD, is an opportunity for all young people to rediscover the beauty of Christian life, and to bring to the ordinary circumstances of daily life a renewed desire to be disciples of Jesus and faithful to his Gospel. The rediscovery of Christian life, then, can be fertile ground for the blossoming of many vocations, to marriage or to the priesthood and consecrated life. All of this will have great benefits for the Church in Korea, for the Asian continent, and for the Church globally.

Secondly, Asia is very receptive to the coexistence of cultures, to dialogue and to complementarity. This will be of great help to young pilgrims on their path of learning to become messengers of peace in a world so torn by conflict and confrontation.

Thirdly, the dynamic Asian context will help young people to think about the dialogue between faith and modernity. They live in a world where they are confronted by challenges of global scope. These include a loss of meaning and purpose felt in some societies, the digital revolution, the climate crisis, economic inequalities, etc. The big questions that these challenges raise will stimulate young people to make their personal contribution so that contemporary culture may be permeated and transformed by the Gospel, with its power, light and freshness.

The theme of the journey from Lisbon to Seoul: 2023-2027

As you know, every year young people are invited to celebrate World Youth Day in their local Churches on the Solemnity of Christ the King. Last week, the Holy Father's Message for the 39th WYD to be celebrated on 24 November was published, 'Those who hope in the Lord will run and not be weary' (cf. Is 40:31). This theme marks the stages of an inner pilgrimage that began with the invitation made in Lisbon to *arise and set out* (cf. WYD Lisbon 2023).

For the Jubilee Year of 2025, young people are called to be pilgrims of hope in Rome and, over the following two years, they will be guided along a path that will culminate in World Youth Day in Seoul 2027. The two themes for this path are included in the documentation you have received that has just been published. The theme chosen by the Holy Father for the 40th WYD is: '**You also are my witnesses, because you have been with me**' (John 15:27); the theme chosen by the Holy Father for the 41st WYD is: '**Take courage! I have overcome the world**' (John 16:33).

That last theme -- I will repeat it, '**Take courage! I have overcome the world!**' (John 16:33) -- will therefore be the theme of the WYD in Seoul in 2027.

Both themes are taken from the Gospel of John. They belong to what is known as Jesus' 'farewell discourse' (cf. John 13-17), when he prepares his disciples to experience the mystery

of his passion and death, in the certainty of his resurrection. The two themes focus, therefore, on witnessing and on the courage that stems from Jesus' paschal victory.

The traditional handing over of the WYD Cross and Icon: 24 November 2024

As is customary after every international WYD, the young people of Lisbon will hand over the symbols of WYD to the young people of Seoul: the Youth Cross and the icon of Mary *Salus populi romani*. This marks the beginning of the Korean Church's spiritual preparation for World Youth Day. This handover will take place on 24 November, the Solemnity of Christ King of the Universe, during Holy Mass in St Peter's Basilica, celebrated by the Pope.

The Youth Cross, also known as the WYD Cross, is always a pilgrim cross. Young Koreans will carry it everywhere -- in the cities, in the countryside, among the suffering, the imprisoned and the poor -- to bring closeness and consolation to all. This cross was entrusted by St John Paul II to young people at the end of the Holy Year of Redemption in 1984. St John Paul II entrusted it to young people with these words: 'Carry it throughout the world as a symbol of Christ's love for humanity, and announce to everyone that only in the death and resurrection of Christ can we find salvation and redemption.'³

The Cross will be taken by young people to Asia, accompanied by the icon of Mary *Salus populi romani*, a sign of Mary's maternal affection and of the Church's own maternal concern for all humanity.

Our hope is that many young people, even those who have never participated in a WYD, will walk a path over the next three years -- above all an interior one --, and come to meet each other in Asia together with the Successor of Peter, and may they all bear courageous witness to Christ together.

Penitential Celebration: 1 October 2024

Finally, a word about the general Assembly of the Synod that will begin in a few days.

At the beginning of the Synod there will be a Penitential Service – presided over by the Holy Father. All people and especially young people are invited to attend “in person” or through “streaming” on the Vatican News web site.

The Church is not just an administrator and dispenser of sacrament forgiveness Pope Francis has taught us that it is also necessary for the Church to ask for forgiveness. The aim of this celebration is not to denounce to sin of others but to ask forgiveness for the sins that the Church may have committed.

³ John Paul II, *To young people when entrusting them with the Cross of the Holy Year of Redemption*, Sunday 22 April 1984.