

FROM THE ARCHBISHOP

The church's hope-filled future

The final days of preparation for a new school year are hectic ones for principals, teachers, secretaries and support staff — not to mention moms and dads, grandparents, heads of school organizations, bus drivers and before- and after-school workers.

Part of the excitement of a new school year is seeing how the students have grown over the summer and hearing about the activities that filled their break. This past week, more than 200 young people from the Archdiocese returned home to begin another school year after what for many was a life-changing experience: World Youth Day in Madrid, Spain.

I also had the pleasure of attending WYD, and as I took part in its various activities, I often wondered what those young people from around the world were “seeing.” Certainly there was fascination at being in a foreign country, curiosity about youth from across the globe speaking scores of languages, excitement at the beauty of Madrid and just plain fun in being with friends and making new ones.

But the main attraction of WYD was without a doubt Pope Benedict XVI, who came to do one thing: preach Jesus Christ to the world's youth. The first WYD occurred in 1987, the inspiration of Blessed John Paul II. Since then it has taken place every two to three years in spots around the world, including Rome, Paris, Denver, Toronto, Manila, Cologne and Sydney; each time it has been a resounding success. Blessed John Paul had an instinctive understanding of the spontaneous faith of young people and the impor-



ARCHBISHOP
J. PETER
SARTAIN

tance of their sharing that faith with others.

He also “saw” in young people, from the earliest days of his priestly ministry, the hope-filled future of the church. Who better than he knew the power of faith, having lived in a country where the Catholic faith did not die even after many decades in which church participation had been severely oppressed? Who knew better than he how to reach young people with the saving Gospel of Jesus? Who knew better than he that the high drama of huge gatherings of humanity in the name of Christ can change the world?

Demands of the Gospel

Pope Benedict has continued the WYD tradition with enthusiasm and vigor. His pastoral style is much different than Blessed John Paul's, but his effect is just as powerful — and the response of the youth just as enthusiastic.

It is Jesus Christ they have both preached, reminding the youth that their hope is in him alone, and that following him in the Catholic Church brings great joy and peace in this life and in life eternal. They have also preached about the demands of the Gospel, none of them easy in today's world, and the responsibility of youth to live in a way that stands out in a world often focused on what cannot bring anyone happiness (and which in

fact brings only more pain and strife).

The organizers of WYD highlighted the needs of youth who suffer, and attention was often given to the poor and starving around the world as well as those oppressed by governments who have no concept of religious freedom.

The young people began each day by attending a catechesis session taught in their native tongue by a bishop, followed by Mass. There were rallies and prayer times, opportunities for prayer and the sacrament of penance in a huge public park (the pope heard confessions one day), inspirational speakers and music in English at the Palacio de Deportes (the “Sports Palace,” an indoor arena), and of course opportunities to be with the pope: a welcome ceremony in a beautiful main plaza, the Stations of the Cross down a main

boulevard in Madrid, a Saturday night vigil at the Aeropuerto Cuatro Vientos (after which most of those attending spent the night in sleeping bags right there) and finally on Sunday morning the celebration of Mass by the pope.

Tales of faith

The crowd at the vigil was estimated at approximately 1.5 million, and I read in one of Madrid's newspapers Monday morning that 2 million attended Sunday Mass! One simply cannot describe what such a sea of humanity looks like. To know that such crowds came together out of love for Christ and their Catholic faith gives one strength and hope.

Our young people met their share of challenges during the week: navi-

DO YOU HAVE AN INTENTION FOR ARCHBISHOP SARTAIN'S PRAYER LIST?

You may send it to him at Archbishop Sartain's Prayer List, Archdiocese of Seattle, 710 Ninth Ave., Seattle, WA 98104.

gating in an unfamiliar city where for most a language other than their own is spoken; temperatures hovering in the high 90s and higher; venues reachable only by crowded public transportation; innumerable challenges faced when millions of people gather in one place; protests by locals alleging that their government had spent public money on the pope's visit; a frightening thunderstorm during the vigil with the Pope; a blazing and unforgiving sun — and sore feet!

But the blessings outweighed the challenges by a factor of 2 million, and young people have returned to their homes around the world with tales to tell their teachers and fellow students as a new school year begins. Theirs are tales of faith, tales of the love of Christ and the power of the Gospel; tales of their responsibility to be disciples in a world that needs Christ; tales of new friends made and new things “seen” with the eyes of faith; tales of zeal for their Catholic faith.

Thank you, Pope Benedict, for providing this opportunity for the youth you love as did your predecessor. Thank you, parents, parish youth ministers and chaperones, whose dedication made it possible for our archdiocese to be represented by so many. Thank you, WYD pilgrims, whose faith in Christ renews the church, this archdiocese and the world.

The organizers of WYD highlighted the needs of youth who suffer, and attention was often given to the poor and starving around the world.