
"Let the holiness of God shine forth" (cf. Mt 5, 16)

item 466

World Youth Day – 2016

As an international gathering of youth celebrating their Catholic faith WYD happens every 3 years. Each time in a different city, in 2016 it was Krakow's turn. Known as the home of St John Paul II and St Faustina this year's theme was very appropriate – "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy".

It was wonderful to be there and to follow in the footsteps of these two saints. Three previous volunteers from Pallotti College, east of Melbourne [Australia], were fortunate to be able to attend, thanks to sponsorship from the College. I was one of them. We had all previously been volunteers on their staff during the past few years – two girls from Ireland and one from the UK.



Official WYD celebrations are actually held across a whole week. And, in recent times, the custom has grown of week long celebrations in each Diocese of the host country just prior – the 'Days in the Diocese'.

Knowing each other we stayed with a wonderfully kind family outside of Warsaw, participating in events with other members of the Pallottine community from across the world. We visited their *Divine Providence* Seminary outside Warsaw and enjoyed a Sunday concert where pilgrims showcased dances and songs from their own countries. I felt an instant connection and it was great to realise how many people hold St Vincent close to their heart. We, in turn, could inform them about our time of volunteering.

The week's official opening celebrations saw us again staying with host families in Krakow itself – in our case in the community of a local parish priest. We met 5 Pallottine sisters whom we had previously encountered in Warsaw and subsequently spent the whole week in their company, attending all the main events together. It felt like Pallotti was guiding us along our way. There was much mutual sharing.

During the week we visited the Sanctuary of Divine Mercy. We prayed in the convent chapel of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy, where Saint Faustina received her revelations. We prayed under the picture with the inscribed words: "Jesus, I trust in you". We attended catecheses, listening attentively to Bishops from various countries speak about the general theme of Mercy. One was from Sydney. Of course we joined the main events such as daily Mass and large gatherings with the Pope. Along with the sisters we visited a new house they were building, for the poor and disadvantaged, walking the streets of Krakow with them, enjoying its sounds and colours.



During that week the local parish priest accompanied us to Auschwitz, a sombre visit. It was hard to imagine the evil that occurred there. Our pilgrimage of faith, love and mercy witnessed the exact opposite.

The enormity of the crowds was difficult to grasp. To think that youth from across the world were gathered in one place, acknowledging their faith before each other, was something that needed to be acknowledged. I stood back at one stage and tried to take in this wonder – all the colourful country flags waving in the air, groups singing WYD songs. Everyone wore a smile and the feeling was one of love, connection and joy – despite some rain.

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I had never been to anything of that scale before. For the main WYD event, a vigil and Sunday Mass, we managed to get quite close to Pope Francis. To see him in the distance and to hear everyone chanting "Papa Francesco" was a memory I will hold dear to my heart forever. We camped out the previous night, waiting for morning. Pope Francis' message focused on the encounter between Jesus and Zacchaeus, recounting how Zacchaeus's life had been changed, despite the obstacles he had to face in order to meet Jesus.

Music was played after each main event. It was nice to be able to join other pilgrims in song and dance. The lyrics of the refrain reinforced the theme: "Blessed are the merciful, for it is mercy that shall be shown to those who show mercy".

During the final Mass six pilgrims received a brightly decorated candle from the Pope. They were from different continents, symbolising the journey of God’s light to each corner of the globe. A very moving moment for me, it somehow demonstrated that an action can speak louder than words. Pope Francis praised the energy and enthusiasm of those present and encouraged them to bring God’s love and mercy to the world. The walk back to the city brought to the fore one of the tougher aspects of the pilgrimage. Plenty of rests were needed, and our rain ponchos certainly worked overtime.

It was Pope John Paul II who initiated the idea of WYD. At the time some questioned how it would work out. I feel that by being in Krakow during that week it was evident just how successful an event like this is – massive groups coming together, overcoming language, cultural and national barriers and just freely expressing and enjoying their catholic faith. The connection to complete strangers was a wonderful feeling, as was the sharing of faith and youthful enthusiasm. A joyous atmosphere pervaded every street in Krakow that week.



My lasting impression was the freedom of each person to express their faith in such a joyful manner and without embarrassment – and that itself became a wide topic of conversation. I felt perfectly comfortable to talk to other pilgrims about their journey in life and how they trust God to guide and direct them. Away from WYD such a topic of conversation is much harder to initiate.

At the final Mass Pope Francis announced that the next event will be held in South America – Panama City in 2019. I imagine it is an honour for any city to be chosen to hold such a wonderful and peaceful event. The people of Poland were extremely welcoming and that created a sense of solidarity and an open celebration of one’s faith, so often lacking in our daily lives. Krakow appeared to me to show the basic goodness of humanity, reinforced by the smiles on people’s faces and the goodness in their hearts.

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item 467

platinum ordination jubilee

*This 95 year old recently celebrated the 70 year ‘Platinum’ anniversary of his ordination and was officially congratulated by Perth Archbishop Timothy Costelloe sdb for so many years of loyal and dedicated priestly ministry. Self-described as a “naturalised sandgroper [West Australian!],” the Victorian-born Pallottine recently spoke to **The eRecord** about his life journey with striking lucidity and a captivating sense of wit.*

Joseph [Joe] Kearney, born 1921, grew up in a devoted catholic family in Melbourne and, at age seven, moved with them to the regional town of Hepburn Springs.

Having received his primary education in a convent school, then secondary education at the Christian Brothers nearby St Patrick’s College [Ballarat], young Joe contemplated the idea of becoming a priest throughout his teenage years. He was eventually led to the Pallottines in 1940.

A six-year spiritual and academic formative journey ensued, with the help of the Franciscans whose students he joined as he ventured into philosophy, theology and scripture. While undertaking those studies, he also



harboured a desire to work in remoter areas of the country – the ‘top-end’ of Western Australia in particular – and to support Aboriginal people.

He was ordained to the priesthood on 28 Jul 1946 by Archbishop Daniel Mannix and lived his first year as a priest in Melbourne.

Fr Joseph Kearney sac eventually arrived to WA in 1948 and served in Broome until 1956. During those years he would visit the small Aboriginal community of Balgo, initially for six months and then a second time for 18 months. “The fondest memories of my priesthood are those from the time I spent in Balgo in 1955,” he recalls.

“There was a mutual trust with the Aboriginal people that made things work. We trusted them and they trusted us. Fr Alphonse [Bleischwitz sac] and I baptised the first small group of children and did a number of holy communions and confirmations while there.”

Joe was to remain in WA for another decade as he relocated north of Broome, into the community of Beagle Bay, from 1961 to 1969.

Then, voted in as Regional Superior, he moved back east to headquarters to serve two three-year terms. In 1975 he was appointed rector of the Melbourne student house, before being re-elected to serve on the Regional Council as secretary and bursar for a further three years.

Following this time in the east Fr Kearney arrived back in Perth in 1981, to serve in Rossmoyne, where he became chaplain to an Aboriginal accommodation facility for high schoolers and apprentices from the Kimberley and other outback regions. That hostel, which closed in the late 1990s, enabled Aboriginal boys and girls to be educated to Year 12 at metropolitan schools or to be apprenticed to local businesses.

Joe was then stationed as Aboriginal chaplain in Geraldton for a further ten years until his retirement. However even then he remained available and served various parishes in need of a priest throughout WA, until 2008. He is currently fully retired back in Rossmoyne. His 70-year-anniversary Mass was celebrated by Regional Leader, Fr Eugene San sac.

thanks to Marco Ceccarelli – The eRecord – PERTH
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