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The Apostolic Nuncio to Poland

# World Youth Day 2016 in Kraków – pilgrimage and mercy

We may use football terminology and say that World Youth Day 2016 will take place on the home ground. Not only due to the fact that it will be held in Kraków, but above all because – as it will soon be presented in details by Cardinal Dziwisz – of the intuition about the significance of such kind of an event originated from Saint John Paul II, an eminent resident of Kraków.

Just like every home match, also this event requires extra effort on the part of the home team. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate and thank His Eminence Cardinal Dziwisz and the government authorities as well as the entire team, both at the local and national level, for their relentless dedication with which they have been preparing this event, on the religious as well as the logistical side.

Similarly, this international scientific conference, which has just begun, has its place in the exquisite promotional mosaic of this event. We are particularly grateful to the organizers: the Pontifical University of John Paul II and the Jagiellonian University.

“Wanderer, there is no path, the path is made by walking.”

Such a thought was formulated by the Spanish poet Antonio Machado. Faith works in a similar fashion. It is a path we make ourselves by walking. We frequently – and rightly so – say that Jesus is “the answer,” but we should not forget that God repeatedly appears on our paths as a call. For the young people of WYD 2016, this call from God sounds as an appeal to start the journey and to become a traveler, a pilgrim.

Making pilgrimages is part of human poverty since a pilgrim always searches for something, somebody he has lost or has not found in his life yet. In this sense, the hundreds of thousands of young people who will arrive in Poland are poor, and they deserve no other welcome, but the one full of mercy.

Some of the young people who will set off on a route to WYD will not be able to say for certain why they are doing it. Doubts concerning one’s own attitude towards oneself, one’s choices, conditions in which one lives, are the first element of human poverty. Such questions give the impression of personal frailty, an answer to which may only be mercy.

Other young pilgrims will embark on the journey with a clear and noble motivation, willing to publicly profess their faith, find spiritual consolation in the great community of the faithful, express hope that they will find answers to their own personal questions. Why am I here, sharing the joy of the feast and faith with other people, why am I knocking on the doors of the sanctuary, why am I knocking on a confessional? The depth of these questions presents the role of mercy in the life of youth, organizers and ministers on the Campus Misericordiae, as well as in confessionals.

Still others will set off on their way to experience being present, just for a few days, within a brotherly community, a place of peace and friendship. Or, at least, to be in a place which has the atmosphere we seek but not always find. However, after reaching the destination, one may also encounter manifestations of disbelief, indifference, and one’s own personal distress. What for the entire fatigue of the journey? That is the question which instantly demands an added value, found in mercy. There may as well be an improvement; but the conditions for a complete peace with oneself and one’s own world will not be satisfied. This is a limitation which may only be overcome by the work of mercy.

The operation of mercy complements the external conditions by the gift of closeness.

It is my wish that World Youth Day 2016 will be an experience of mercy, both given and received, for which Pope Francis calls us all.