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Pastoral and spiritual fruits of World Youth Day 2005 in Cologne

World Youth Day in Cologne had the theme: “We have come to worship him” (Matthew 2:2). If you ask for the fruits of this unique event, you have to ask first about the expectations.

On 17th March 2005, i.e. two weeks before his death, Pope John Paul II set up his expectations for youth of Rome and Latium. This was a prayer and a message. He prayed: “Jesus, help us to understand, that we need to learn for the work in your Church, also in the urgent area of New Evangelization, to be, that means to be with you in the adoration, to be in your comfortable presence. Only out of the internal relationship with you grows the real, effective, truly apostolic activity.” Evangelization stemming from adoration, its source, has always been John Paul II's desire.

Fruits

In Cologne, thousands of young people celebrated their faith together with Pope Benedict XVI. The vigil and the silent adoration on 20th and

21st August was the climax of that World Youth Day. But what are the spiritual and pastoral fruits of that event of faith for Germany?

1. On Marienfeld we have now a park with a path for pilgrims and on the hill, where pope Benedict celebrated the Mass, there is now a little chapel that reminds us of that event.

2. The mixed crowd of young people from all over the world celebrating with Pope Benedict and expressing their faith is still kept in minds of Cologne citizens.

3. There are some **measurable fruits of that WYD**:

a. In 2005–2007, the number of candidates for priesthood increased highly all over Germany. However, it has been again on a decline since 2007.

b. The number of WYD participants from Germany increased highly for WYDs in Sydney, Madrid and Rio compared to the number of German pilgrims on WYDs before. Of course, that is what we hope for in Cracow, too.

4. The priest responsible for the Catholic youth in Cologne said that a lot of young people experienced a renewal of their faith and live it now in parishes, groups, etc. more seriously.

5. Doctor Heiner Koch, the Secretary General of WYD in Cologne and now Archbishop of Berlin, highlighted the spiritual community of the local organization committee, which is still in his mind. With some of its members, he has stayed in touch until today.

Archbishop Koch also mentions the “Nightfever” initiative as a big fruit of World Youth Day in Cologne. What does he mean?

Nightfever

The German Youth Pastoral Centre developed some models and structures to follow on from World Youth Day in Cologne. They were theologically correct and well-organized. We, Germans love to organize everything perfectly. But His Excellence Domik Schwaderlapp, the Auxiliary Bishop of Cologne, said some days ago that none of these developed ideas really worked. On contrary, “Nightfever” – the real fruit of WYD in Cologne

appeared unexpectedly, not planned, not theologically mastered. It came from young people themselves.

After World Youth Day two young people organized a one-off event called “WYD Goes On.” It was an evening with a Holy Mass, Eucharistic adoration and the sacrament of Reconciliation. They did in the Church exactly what happened during the WYD Vigil. It was thought to be a singular evening but young people wanted more. They brought this spark into other cities in Germany and named themselves “Nightfever.”

What is “Nightfever” about? “Nightfever” is organized and carried out entirely by young people. Priests come only for the Holy Mass, to hear confessions and to bless.

“Nightfever” takes place on Saturday evenings in the central church of the city, for example in Cologne Cathedral, next to which the Cologne central train station is located. “Nightfever” does not take place every Saturday. In Cologne it happens once a month, and in other cities – three times a year, depending on the organizational strengths of the local team.

First, the local teams gather together to pray for the evening, for all people that will come to the church. Then, they decorate the church, set up lights, etc. Finally, “Nightfever” starts with the Holy Mass, followed by a short testimony or a catechesis and adoration. Different Catholic groups are invited to arrange the worship. “Nightfever” is not managed by one specific parish, group or priest. It is open to different groups and communities from the whole Catholic Church. It is an initiative based on the unity in worship, which does not want to set up a separate community. During the adoration you can draw Bible verses from the box or write down an intercession and put it into another box, which after the “Nightfever” evening will be handed over to monastery monks and nuns who will pray for your request. It is also possible to talk with a priest, go to confession or receive an individual blessing. You simply need a lot of priests for many hours. Just amazing!

During the adoration (and this is one aspect of New Evangelization), young people go out of the church always in pairs, as Jesus said, to invite others to enter the church and to meet Christ. Therefore, young people give them small candles, invite them to light them in the church, stay and

pray for a moment. A candle is a well-known symbol so a lot of people accept it and are happy to be invited inside. Everyone is welcome and can stay as long as he or she wants.

The Nightfever evening finishes with Compline and the Eucharistic blessing. Afterwards, there is a team meeting with the question: What has God done this evening? What have we experienced? Finally, we do the clearing.

“Nightfever” shows a positive picture of the Church in Germany – young, open and inspiring. It is the easy concept of adoration and confession. Nightfever is also attended by groups preparing for the sacrament of confirmation. They receive a short catechesis and some instructions, can participate in the adoration and go to the street to invite others into the church. This way, they are briefly trained in the New Evangelization.

“Nightfever” has been developing really fast since 2005. Today it is celebrated in a lot of cities in Germany and has spread to 26 out of 27 German dioceses. Every year it reaches to about 300,000 people, mostly those without roots in the faith. Since 2008, young people have also brought it to other countries and continents, predominantly because of their studies abroad. Thus, it is celebrated in 27 countries today. Since 2005 over 2,300 Nightfever evenings have taken place. Nightfever was held during WYD in Madrid or during the Olympic Games in London. The editor-in-chief of a Catholic news agency in Germany said that Nightfever could be the spiritual export “goods” of Germany in the 21st century.

Now, there are also theological faculties, spiritual formations, etc. developed on the basis of that phenomenon.

Conclusion

The prayer of St. John Paul II for WYD in Cologne involved a desire that evangelization would stem from adoration. “Nightfever,” perhaps the real fruit of WYD in Cologne, exactly answers that prayer, not being aware of it at the beginning. It was not prepared based on any theological models or principles of pastoral care for youth, not organized in offices, but initiated by the experience of God’s Mercy.

My request for WYD in Cracow? Be open-minded to the new initiatives that will arise from the hearts of your youth. Do not try to prevent them. Do not try to own them. God will let them grow.

We hope that there will be a Nightfever evening held here during WYD in Cracow. We have already applied for Youth Festival. This will be our present for the hometown of St. John Paul II, who prayed in a prophetic way before WYD in Cologne.

