

World Youth Day 2016 Krakow. The School of Faith and Humanity, eds. by J. Stala, P. Guzik,
The Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow Press, Krakow 2018, p. 9–12
ISBN 978-83-7438-735-4 (print), ISBN 978-83-7438-736-1 (online)
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15633/9788374387361.01>

Rev. Józef Stala

The Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow, Poland

Paulina Guzik

The Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow, Poland

Introduction

World Youth Day in Krakow has transformed the lives of many people, especially the young ones. Youth, who came from all over the world, have experienced the universality of the Church, have strengthened their faith, but above all, they have met a living Jesus Christ. Young people who have met with other young coming from so many countries and with the Master from Nazareth started to feel much stronger, because they have succeeded in finding new sources of life, and gradually started to change themselves. Their young hearts had needed this World Youth Day to strengthen their relationships with God and other young Christians. The 2,5 million young people who participated in the final mass with Pope Francis in Brzegi have taken refuge in his words, got up from the now-famous couch and carried their own lives into an adventure – the adventure of being Christians in a world that promotes values we encounter every day in the papers. But WYD is not something utopic. It is a down to Earth pilgrimage that helps the Universal Church see the needs of young people, helps Mother Church listen to the youth's struggles and answers them directly through the successor of Peter.

World Youth Day is not an easy meeting to hold. It takes two years, 120 people in the committee, 20 000 volunteers and 350 000 registered pilgrims to organize this event, not to mention thousands of overtime hours for the members of the committee and sometimes a lifetime saving for the youth from certain parts of the world to come. Yet, it is still worth organizing, so that the Christian youth have a chance to meet, not only online, but in reality.

Pope Francis stressed, at the opening ceremony for WYD in Krakow, that it is a meeting of those who “went the extra mile.”¹ The Holy Father urged young people to be those who don’t retire early, but to be those who seek to give more in their lives. This invitation was well-received by the young people, as seen in the post-WYD surveys which the committee conducted. These surveys showed that over 93% of the participants of Krakow 2016 said that WYD allowed them to be more convinced of their desire to improve society.²

The present publication *World Youth Day 2016 Krakow. The School of Faith and Humanity* continues the ideas, insights and understanding of WYDs underlined in the monograph *World Youth Days. A Testimony to the Hope of Young People*.³ But this book aims more to see the fruits of WYD in Krakow and help organizers of future large church events such as World Youth Day, as well as youth ministers, teachers and animators to strengthen their ability to assist youth in the mission that Pope John Paul II outlined in Toronto: to “profess their faith, bestow their love, and impart their hope to others.”⁴ This volume brings together an extremely wide range of concerns regarding Christian youth, their experiences, culture, beliefs, but also, the processes of WYD preparation in Krakow and Panama. This book analyses not only organizational issues, but first of all, shows the fruits of WYD, followed by the legacy and tips for future

1 https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2016/july/documents/papa-francesco_20160728_polonia-accoglienza-giovani.html (25.06.2018).

2 P. Guzik, C. O’Reilly, WYD 2016 – *The Largest European Event of the 21st Century*, Krakow 2018, p. 217.

3 *World Youth Days. A Testimony to the Hope of Young People*, eds. J. Stala, A. Porębski, Krakow 2016.

4 http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/homilies/2002/documents/hf_jp-ii_hom_20020728_xvii-wyd.html (25.06.2018).

organizers from the side of those who have been through the storm and sunshine of organizing this large Church event in Krakow.

This monograph consists of two important parts, distinct but complementary and begins with the fruits and influence of WYD on youth. The authors, in the first part, underline many organizational aspects of WYD in Krakow and Rio, and give tips for Panama.

This volume also remembers the founding Father of WYD – John Paul II. Not only was he an initiator of the event, but also the one who protected it and wanted it to be continued. He was clearly present at WYD 2016 in his beloved city, Krakow, which Pope Francis stressed at the very first meeting with young people at Blonia field: “In this, the land of his birth, I especially want to thank Saint John Paul II [loud applause] – louder, louder – who first came up with the idea of these meetings and gave them such momentum. From his place in heaven, he is with us and he sees all of you: so many young people from such a variety of nations, cultures and languages but with one aim, that of celebrating Jesus who is living in our midst. Do you understand this? To celebrate Jesus who is living in our midst! To say that Jesus is alive means to rekindle our enthusiasm in following him, to renew our passionate desire to be his disciples.”⁵

The second part consists of studies in which WYD consequences are analyzed especially from a pedagogical, pastoral, ecclesial, social, cultural and personal perspectives. Authors present WYD from the eyes of pilgrims and hosts, highlight the liturgy of WYD, important words spoken in Krakow, the deepening of youth faith and the far-reaching consequences of Pope Francis’ teaching on youth life.

The keyword for the second volume of *World Youth Day 2016 Krakow. The School of Faith and Humanity* is hope: the hope that both youth and future popes will carry on following the mission entrusted to us by Saint John Paul II. When John Paul II was closing World Youth Day in Toronto, the very last one he participated in here on Earth, he told the youth gathered there: “You are young, and the Pope is old, 82 or 83 years of life is not the same as 22 or 23. But the Pope still fully identifies with your hopes and

5 https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2016/july/documents/papa-francesco_20160728_polonia-accoglienza-giovani.html (25.06.2018).

aspirations. Although I have lived through much darkness, under harsh totalitarian regimes, I have seen enough evidence to be unshakably convinced that no difficulty, no fear is so great that it can completely suffocate **the hope that springs eternal in the hearts of the young**. You are our hope, the young are our hope.”⁶ A hope that past experiences will be smoothly transferred to next organizers so that the event is organized professionally and according to God’s will. A hope that World Youth Day will be a lasting testimony of the living faith.

⁶ http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/homilies/2002/documents/hf_jp-ii_hom_20020728_xvii-wyd.html (25.06.2018).