

World Youth Day

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Design a pilgrimage for you and your friends.

Why would you go on a pilgrimage?

Where would you travel?

What would you bring with you?

What would you do when you arrived?

How would this sacred journey change the way you lived when you came back home?

How would you like to be part of a group of hundreds of thousands of young Catholics from all over the world who gather to pray, sing, share, and just have some good fun? Every other year since 1985, teens and college age students have had an opportunity for this joyful adventure to World Youth Day.

The idea for World Youth Day came from Blessed Pope John Paul II. The United Nations set aside 1985 as a special year for the world's young people. So the pope invited all the young people of the world to come together in Rome. The young people responded so enthusiastically that the Vatican decided to make the gathering a continuing event.

Since then, an international World Youth Day has been held every other year. Worldwide gatherings so far have been held on four continents. At every gathering, a special cross, originally presented by Blessed Pope John Paul II as a sign of God's love for young people, has led the way. The cross has also traveled to other youth conferences throughout the world.

Pope John Paul himself spoke at each worldwide assembly until his death in 2005.

At the World Youth Day held again in Rome, Italy in August 2000, more than 700,000 young people

heard his invitation to "come and see." He was urging them to be disciples just as Jesus had urged his first disciples!

The celebration in Rome lasted for a whole week. Everyone had a chance to attend open air Masses, Stations of the Cross, a candlelight vigil, and other prayer services. Over 300 spiritual and cultural events were held. Many of the concerts and dramas were staged by various youth groups visiting the city. Places were also set aside for quiet personal reflection.

At these worldwide events, young people have opportunities to talk with other young people from many other nations. They learn how much all Christians hold in common. They learn that we share the same faith in Jesus and the Church, and that we all have the same hopes and concerns for the future.

World Youth Day gives young Catholics an opportunity to become pilgrims. Making a pilgrimage—a journey to a sacred place—is one of the oldest traditions in the Church. This youth oriented pilgrimage every other year reminds all young people that our lives are a pilgrimage to God.