



# WORLD YOUTH DAY 2014

Celebrated on Palm Sunday, 13th April 2014

Blessed are the poor  
in spirit, for theirs is  
the kingdom of heaven

(Mt 5:3)

ARCHDIOCESAN  
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FOR

Youth+

# *Introduction*

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This year marks the 29th World Youth Day. World Youth Day (WYD) is not just an event that occurs every 2-3 years but an annual celebration in the Church's calendar. For some years WYD occurs as an international gathering, hosted in a city where young people are all invited to attend. On the alternate years WYD is celebrated in parishes on Palm Sunday.

It would be great to make your parish aware that Palm Sunday this year is also World Youth Day. There are many ways of doing this such as including a prayer for youth in the intercessory prayers during Mass, having a general blessing for all young people in your parish, or even having a special celebration after Mass. Speak to your parish priest about the best way to incorporate WYD into your Palm Sunday celebrations.

For 2014 Pope Francis has given World Youth Day the theme "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" which comes from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount in Matthew's gospel (Mt 5:3).

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# *Pope Francis' letter to youth*

Every year, our Pope writes a letter specifically to youth. Based on the theme for the 2014 WYD, this year's letter is a call for all young people to choose true happiness and not be fooled by what the world promises will make us happy. Pope Francis explains what it is to be "poor in Spirit" and gives three concrete examples of what young people can do to live this poverty of spirit. It would be great if all Catholic young people could receive a copy of this letter. The AOY has designed a version that can be easily printed and distributed. It is located on pages 8-11 of this document and can be printed separately for young people in your parish youth group.



InterMirifica.net

## *Suggested prayers of intercession*

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Amongst your usual Prayers of Intercession at Mass you might like to include one of the following prayers for young people:

- For the youth of our parish, may they understand that you Lord stand beside them, that you guide them on their path and strengthen them on their journey of faith.
- For our young people who celebrate World Youth Day today. May their lives be ever richer and their faith ever deeper as they come to understand the power of your presence in their lives.
- That our parish community will continue to welcome, support and pray for all young people, especially those who are in crisis or who have not heard the Good News. As we share in the Church's celebration of World Youth Day remind us that as followers of Christ we are called to pass on the richness of our faith with all the generations to come.



# *A blessing for young people*

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Speak with your parish priest about giving a blessing for young people on Palm Sunday. The prayer could be as follows.

At some point during Mass the priest asks all young people in attendance to stand.

Priest: Lord Jesus Christ. We thank you for the gift of these young people in our parish. Continue to guide them and strengthen them as they walk the journey of life. At times of joy and sorrow constantly remind them that you are their endless companion. In the coming week may they continue to grow in their understanding of your death and resurrection and its importance in their faith journeys. As we celebrate World Youth Day today, may our parish community remember and acknowledge that young people are an important part of the universal church.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

**All: Amen**



## *After Mass celebrations*

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After Palm Sunday Mass the youth of the parish might like to organise a BBQ and/or a tea and coffee stand for the Parishioners. If this is something that already occurs in your parish the youth might like to offer their assistance to those who usually coordinate this.



## *Ideas to celebrate WYD as a youth group*

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As well as marking this celebration at your Palm Sunday Mass you might like to also mark the occasion with your youth group. Some ideas could include

- Attend the annual Palm Sunday walk, this year hosted by Evangelium and the Archdiocesan Office for Youth. See <http://evangelium.co/palm-sunday-melbourne-church-walk> for more details.
- Share a dinner together at a local restaurant or a youth group member's house.
- Hold a Welcome Night in the parish to invite new members to join your youth group
- Feature Pope Francis' letter as the theme for your youth group and use the session outline on pages 6 - 7 to break open the theme.
- Get involved in the parish's liturgy for Palm Sunday – helping out with reading, music or other roles your parish normally has.
- Have a special prayer night with special intentions for your parish youth group, young people in your community who do not know of God's love for them and all young people throughout the world.

# Youth group session outline on the theme “WYD 2014”

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## **Introduction:**

Explain to the young people about WYD and Pope Francis’ letter to youth using the notes from the above introduction.

## **Activity one: reading the letter**

Hand out a copy of Pope Francis’ letter and read it aloud together. You may choose to have different young people read out different sections. **Note:** if you think it will take too long to read the entire letter, you may want to just read aloud sections two and three.



## **Activity two: group discussion**

Break into small groups and discuss the following questions:

1. Who are the people in my life who demonstrate living simply? What do I admire about them?
2. Pope Francis talks about the need to be less attached to material goods. What are the “unneeded extras” in my life? What is “lavish spending”?
3. What was my response to Pope Francis’ call to change the way I see the poor?
4. Can you think of a time where you have learned something from someone you considered to be “poor”?

### Activity three: saint study

In his letter Pope Francis mentions a number of saints who have offered us a good example of how to live in the spirit of poverty:

- St Francis of Assisi
- Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati
- St Benedict Joseph Labré
- St Therese of the Child Jesus (aka St Therese of Lisieux)
- Blessed Pope John Paul II
- Our Lady



Once again, break into smaller groups or pairs to research in more detail the lives of these saints. You may like to bring books about the lives of these saints, provide extracts that summarise their lives, or encourage the young people to research them on their computers/ mobile phones. If you have a large group, you may like to include other saints who are good models of living in the spirit of poverty. In particular you may like to answer these questions:

1. In what way did this saint live poverty?
2. Did your saint carry out any dramatic actions that demonstrated living poverty?
3. What were the challenges this saint faced?
4. Did they speak about a specific encounter with Christ that helped them live poverty?

Have each group share with the larger group what they learned about their saint and the way in which they lived the spirit of poverty.

### Activity four: closing prayer

Finish the session by praying together for the grace to live in a spirit of poverty. You may like to pray aloud spontaneously, use the Magnificat prayer that Pope Francis refers to at the end of the letter, or allow the young people a time of quiet reflection whilst playing quiet music or one of the songs below.

#### Magnificat:

My soul glorifies the Lord,  
my spirit rejoices in God, my Saviour.  
He looks on his servant in her lowliness;  
henceforth all ages will call me blessed  
The Almighty works marvels for me.  
Holy his name!  
His mercy is from age to age,  
on those who fear him.  
He puts forth his arm in strength  
and scatters the proud-hearted.  
He casts the mighty from their thrones  
and raises the lowly.  
He fills the starving with good things,  
sends the rich away empty.  
He protects Israel, his servant,  
remembering his mercy,  
the mercy promised to our fathers,  
to Abraham and his sons for ever.

#### Song suggestions:

- Unwavering *Matt Maher*
- Come to the Water *John Foley*
- Hail Mary, Gentle Woman *Carey Landry*
- Take Lord, Receive *John Foley*
- The Potter's Hand *Darlene Zschech*
- Your Grace is Enough *Matt Maher*



# Message of Pope Francis

FOR THE TWENTY-NINTH WORLD YOUTH DAY 2014

*“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 5:3)*

Dear Young Friends,

How vividly I recall the remarkable meeting we had in Rio de Janeiro for the twenty-eighth World Youth Day. It was a great celebration of faith and fellowship! The wonderful people of Brazil welcomed us with open arms, like the statue of Christ the Redeemer which looks down from the hill of Corcovado over the magnificent expanse of Copacabana beach. There, on the seashore, Jesus renewed his call to each one of us to become his missionary disciples. May we perceive this call as the most important thing in our lives and share this gift with others, those near and far, even to the distant geographical and existential peripheries of our world.

The next stop on our intercontinental youth pilgrimage will be in Krakow in 2016. As a way of accompanying our journey together, for the next three years I would like to reflect with you on the Beatitudes found in the Gospel of Saint Matthew (5:1-12). This year we will begin by reflecting on the first Beatitude: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 5:3). For 2015 I suggest: “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Mt 5:8). Then, in 2016, our theme will be: “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy” (Mt 5:7).

## 1. The revolutionary power of the Beatitudes

It is always a joyful experience for us to read and reflect on the Beatitudes! Jesus proclaimed them in his first great sermon, preached on the shore of the sea of Galilee. There was a very large crowd, so Jesus went up on the mountain to teach his disciples. That is why it is known as “the Sermon on the Mount”. In the Bible, the mountain is regarded as a place where God reveals himself. Jesus, by preaching on the mount, reveals himself to be a divine teacher, a new Moses. What does he tell us? He shows us the way to life, the way that he himself has taken. Jesus himself is the way, and he proposes this way as the path to true happiness. Throughout his life, from his birth in the stable in Bethlehem until his death on the cross and his resurrection, Jesus embodied the Beatitudes. All the promises of God’s Kingdom were fulfilled in him.

In proclaiming the Beatitudes, Jesus asks us to follow him and to travel with him along the path of love, the path that alone leads to eternal life. It is not an easy journey, yet the Lord promises us his grace and he never abandons us. We face so many challenges in life: poverty, distress, humiliation, the struggle for justice, persecutions, the difficulty of daily conversion, the effort to remain faithful to our call to holiness, and

many others. But if we open the door to Jesus and allow him to be part of our lives, if we share our joys and sorrows with him, then we will experience the peace and joy that only God, who is infinite love, can give.

The Beatitudes of Jesus are new and revolutionary. They present a model of happiness contrary to what is usually communicated by the media and by the prevailing wisdom. A worldly way of thinking finds it scandalous that God became one of us and died on a cross! According to the logic of this world, those whom Jesus proclaimed blessed are regarded as useless, “losers”. What is glorified is success at any cost, affluence, the arrogance of power and self-affirmation at the expense of others.

Jesus challenges us, young friends, to take seriously his approach to life and to decide which path is right for us and leads to true joy. This is the great challenge of faith. Jesus was not afraid to ask his disciples if they truly wanted to follow him or if they preferred to take another path (cf. Jn 6:67). Simon Peter had the courage to reply: “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life” (Jn 6:68). If you too are able to say “yes” to Jesus, your lives will become both meaningful and fruitful.



## 2. The courage to be happy

What does it mean to be “blessed” (makarioi in Greek)? To be blessed means to be happy. Tell me: Do you really want to be happy? In an age when we are constantly being enticed by vain and empty illusions of happiness, we risk settling for less and “thinking small” when it comes to the meaning of life. Think big instead! Open your hearts! As Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati once said, “To live without faith, to have no heritage to uphold, to fail to struggle constantly to defend the truth: this is not living. It is scraping by. We should never just scrape by, but really live” (Letter to I. Bonini, 27 February 1925). In his homily on the day of Pier Giorgio Frassati’s beatification (20 May 1990), John Paul II called him “a man of the Beatitudes” (AAS 82 [1990], 1518).

If you are really open to the deepest aspirations of your hearts, you will realize that you possess an unquenchable thirst for happiness, and this will allow you to expose and reject the “low cost” offers and approaches all around you. When we look only for success, pleasure and possessions, and we turn these into idols, we may well have moments of exhilaration, an illusory sense of satisfaction, but ultimately we become enslaved, never satisfied, always looking for more. It is a tragic thing to see a young person who “has everything”, but is weary and weak.

Saint John, writing to young people, told them: “You are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one” (1 Jn 2:14). Young people who choose Christ are strong: they are fed by his word and they do not need to ‘stuff themselves’ with other things! Have the courage to swim against the tide. Have the courage to be truly happy! Say no to an ephemeral, superficial and throwaway culture, a culture that assumes that you are incapable of taking on responsibility and facing the great challenges of life!

## 3. Blessed are the poor in spirit...

The first Beatitude, our theme for the next World Youth Day, says that the poor in spirit are blessed for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. At a time when so many people are suffering as a result of the financial crisis, it might seem strange to link poverty and happiness. How can we consider poverty a blessing?

First of all, let us try to understand what it means to



be “poor in spirit”. When the Son of God became man, he chose the path of poverty and self-emptying. As Saint Paul said in his letter to the Philippians: “Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in human likeness” (2:5-7). Jesus is God who strips himself of his glory. Here we see God’s choice to be poor: he was rich and yet he became poor in order to enrich us through his poverty (cf. 2 Cor 8:9). This is the mystery we contemplate in the crib when we see the Son of God lying in a manger, and later on the cross, where his self-emptying reaches its culmination.

The Greek adjective *ptochós* (poor) does not have a purely material meaning. It means “a beggar”, and it should be seen as linked to the Jewish notion of the *anawim*, “God’s poor”. It suggests lowliness, a sense of one’s limitations and existential poverty. The *anawim* trust in the Lord, and they know that they can count on him.

As Saint Therese of the Child Jesus clearly saw, by his incarnation Jesus came among us as a poor beggar, asking for our love. The Catechism of the Catholic Church tells us that “man is a beggar before God” (No. 2559) and that prayer is the encounter of God’s thirst and our own thirst (No. 2560).

Saint Francis of Assisi understood perfectly the secret of the Beatitude of the poor in spirit. Indeed, when Jesus spoke to him through the leper and from the crucifix, Francis recognized both God’s grandeur and his own lowliness. In his prayer, the Poor Man of Assisi would spend hours asking the Lord: “Who are you?”

“Who am I?” He renounced an affluent and carefree life in order to marry “Lady Poverty”, to imitate Jesus and to follow the Gospel to the letter. Francis lived in imitation of Christ in his poverty and in love for the poor – for him the two were inextricably linked – like two sides of one coin.

You might ask me, then: What can we do, specifically, to make poverty in spirit a way of life, a real part of our own lives? I will reply by saying three things.

First of all, try to be free with regard to material things. The Lord calls us to a Gospel lifestyle marked by sobriety, by a refusal to yield to the culture of consumerism. This means being concerned with the essentials and learning to do without all those unneeded extras which hem us in. Let us learn to be detached from possessiveness and from the idolatry of money and lavish spending. Let us put Jesus first. He can free us from the kinds of idol-worship which enslave us. Put your trust in God, dear young friends! He knows and loves us, and he never forgets us. Just as he provides for the lilies of the field (cf. Mt 6:28), so he will make sure that we lack nothing. If we are to come through the financial crisis, we must be also ready to change our lifestyle and avoid so much wastefulness. Just as we need the courage to be happy, we also need the courage to live simply.

Second, if we are to live by this Beatitude, all of us need to experience a conversion in the way we see the poor. We have to care for them and be sensitive to their spiritual and material needs. To you young people I especially entrust the task of restoring solidarity to the heart of human culture. Faced with old and new forms of poverty – unemployment, migration and addictions of various kinds – we have the duty to be alert and thoughtful, avoiding the temptation to remain indifferent. We have to remember all those who feel unloved, who have no hope for the future and who have given up on life out of discouragement, disappointment or fear. We have to learn to be on the side of the poor, and not just indulge in rhetoric about the poor! Let us go out to meet them, look into their eyes and listen to them. The poor provide us with a concrete opportunity to encounter Christ himself, and to touch his suffering flesh.

However – and this is my third point – the poor are not just people to whom we can give something. They have much to offer us and to teach us. How

much we have to learn from the wisdom of the poor! Think about it: several hundred years ago a saint, Benedict Joseph Labré, who lived on the streets of Rome from the alms he received, became a spiritual guide to all sorts of people, including nobles and prelates. In a very real way, the poor are our teachers. They show us that people’s value is not measured by their possessions or how much money they have in the bank. A poor person, a person lacking material possessions, always maintains his or her dignity. The poor can teach us much about humility and trust in God. In the parable of the pharisee and the tax-collector (cf. Lk 18:9-14), Jesus holds the tax-collector up as a model because of his humility and his acknowledgment that he is a sinner. The widow who gave her last two coins to the temple treasury is an example of the generosity of all those who have next to nothing and yet give away everything they have (Lk 21:1-4).

#### **4. ... for theirs is the kingdom of heaven**



The central theme of the Gospel is the kingdom of God. Jesus is the kingdom of God in person; he is Immanuel, God-with-us. And it is in the human heart that the kingdom, God’s sovereignty, takes root and grows. The kingdom is at once both gift and promise. It has already been given to us in Jesus, but it has yet to be realized in its fullness. That is why we pray to the Father each day: “Thy kingdom come”.

There is a close connection between poverty and evangelization, between the theme of the last World Youth Day – “Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations!” (Mt 28:19) – and the theme for this year: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 5:3). The Lord wants a poor Church which evangelizes the poor. When Jesus



sent the Twelve out on mission, he said to them: “Take no gold, nor silver, nor copper in your belts, no bag for your journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor a staff; for the labourers deserve their food” (Mt 10:9-10). Evangelical poverty is a basic condition for spreading the kingdom of God. The most beautiful and spontaneous expressions of joy which I have seen during my life were by poor people who had little to hold onto. Evangelization in our time will only take place as the result of contagious joy.

We have seen, then, that the Beatitude of the poor in spirit shapes our relationship with God, with material goods and with the poor. With the example and words of Jesus before us, we realize how much we need to be converted, so that the logic of being more will prevail over that of having more! The saints can best help us to understand the profound meaning of the Beatitudes. So the canonization of John Paul II, to be celebrated on the Second Sunday of Easter, will be an event marked by immense joy. He will be the great patron of the World Youth Days which he inaugurated and always supported. In the communion of saints he will continue to be a father and friend to all of you.

This month of April marks the thirtieth anniversary of the entrustment of the Jubilee Cross of the Redemption to the young. That symbolic act by John

Paul II was the beginning of the great youth pilgrimage which has since crossed the five continents. The Pope’s words on that Easter Sunday in 1984 remain memorable: “My dear young people, at the conclusion of the Holy Year, I entrust to you the sign of this Jubilee Year: the cross of Christ! Carry it throughout the world as a symbol of the love of the Lord Jesus for humanity, and proclaim to everyone that it is only in Christ, who died and rose from the dead, that salvation and redemption are to be found”.

Dear friends, the Magnificat, the Canticle of Mary, poor in spirit, is also the song of everyone who lives by the Beatitudes. The joy of the Gospel arises from a heart which, in its poverty, rejoices and marvels at the works of God, like the heart of Our Lady, whom all generations call “blessed” (cf. Lk 1:48). May Mary, Mother of the poor and Star of the new evangelization help us to live the Gospel, to embody the Beatitudes in our lives, and to have the courage always to be happy.

From the Vatican, 21 January 2014

Memorial of Saint Agnes, Virgin and Martyr  
Francis

ARCHDIOCESAN  
OFFICE  
FOR

# Youth+

An agency of the  
Catholic Archdiocese  
of Melbourne

Thomas Carr Centre  
278 Victoria Parade  
East Melbourne

t. +61 3 9412 3300  
e. aoy@cam.org.au

 [www.cam.org.au/youth](http://www.cam.org.au/youth)

 ArchdiocesanOffice ForYouth

 @aoymelb