

Friday 9 July, 2010

Session 7 – Keynote: Prayer and pilgrimage

Fr Dan Benedetti mgl

Opened with prayer and a presentation on how prayer opens us – there are 35 keynotes and 300 workshops; everyone will have a different Pray 2010 experience

There is a crisis of searching for God, especially in young people whom JP II said were lonely. He established WYD to bring people of similar desires together. We as a nation need to experience what it is to be an Australian Catholic and deepen our understanding by getting out of our comfort zone. Indigenous people are so gifted and as JP II said, when their contribution is joyfully received, the Australian church will be fully alive.

Physical journeys help give us a sense of spiritual journey – the joy of reaching the destination but also the realization that it's just the beginning of a new journey.

The gift of pilgrimage:

- Prior to WYD08 many young Australians didn't know what a pilgrimage was. But there's a long Christian tradition Sr Egeria (Spanish nun who visited the Holy Land at end of the 5th century and kept a travel diary).
- Camino (to St James of Compostella for over 1000 years) give yourself the time and space to get back to God. It's a form of penance – some or all of the 800kms.
- It attracts those who want to travel and go beyond what is familiar and close; the attraction of Holy Places/beautiful places (mountains; like in the Transfiguration); somewhere to connect with God, to hear God speak into our hearts – the physical that speaks to the spiritual.
- Aussie pilgrimage - 'Light to the Nations' Easter pilgrimage at Gaylong; not a place of natural beauty but aridity – the harshness of drought affected land (which can mirror the dryness in our hearts). There's a hill called Rosary mountain where Bishop Polding prayed for this nation especially young people; during the pilgrimage there is a diversity of prayer (silent/talkers/Rosary/those who run ahead)
- Many are now familiar with the Journey of the WYD Cross and Icon. As JP II said 'this demonstrates that the Cross walks with young people and young people walk with the Cross' - bringing personal needs and the needs of the world to God, to that powerful symbol of self giving love. Again the physical as a means to reaching the spiritual. The JCI meant people visibly identified with their faith – something not common for modern Catholics – to embrace it, cry with it, walk the streets with it, follow it, praise God with it, be challenged by it, celebrate the Mass with it – a chance to seek meaning. To speak words of life and truth to young people. To acknowledge the chaos in our world and life. Don't turn away from God when sadness and confusion comes; it's at that very moment that God is there. It's so important to discover Jesus in chaos, craziness and confusion
- God brings order out of chaos – a beauty even. This is the pattern of our Christian life. There's going to be wounds and suffering and sacrifice and we're going to need each other but the joyous goal can be reached
- A chance to be 'out there' for God – it's OK to be catholic, visible, public and can have a powerful positive effect. We have experiences of hope. The effects of WYD aren't over – the Holy Father's words continue to inspire and challenge.
- When we get close to Jesus, we get close to ourselves – we get to know ourselves. The Holy Spirit gives courage. We need to be visible and vocal. 1 Pet 3:15 - we need to be ready to give an account of why we are so joyful.
- Pilgrimages allow us to find the voice of silence – to hear God's voice. The footprints of God on our land that tells us who we are in this land. We need to share the journey/share the stories of the journey (how we encounter God on the journey).
- What an opportunity we have to share Mary MacKillop's journey this special year! We can journey with her.