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## THE WORLD YOUTH DAYS IN CANADA IN 2002!

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On August 19, 2000, Pope John Paul II announced that the XVII<sup>th</sup> World Youth Days would be held in Toronto in July, 2002. From July 18 to July 28, next year, the Canadian Church will be privileged to welcome thousands and thousands of young people, perhaps more than 500,000 – and several will be coming to our region!

### VISITS TO DIOCESES

As a first step, the young people will make a first Canadian experience by coming to one of the dioceses of Canada: there are 63 Latin Rite and 8 Eastern Rite dioceses in the country. However, because of distances, some dioceses will be in a better position than others to host the visitors. It would not be surprising if several thousand young people came to our region. Young people from the Paris region have already been here; it could also very well be that our missionaries invite their young people to come here. So, we shall be having a special visit between July 18 and 22, 2002. A special programme is being drawn up to allow our guests a stay with families, have a celebration with the bishop, enjoy get-togethers with the general population, and participate in religious discussions and instructions. A diocesan ad hoc committee has been formed to ensure the orderly development of the programme: organisation, information, and facilitation. The World Youth Days (WYD) website is [www.wyd2002.org](http://www.wyd2002.org) or [www.jmj2002.org](http://www.jmj2002.org).

### THE CROSS, SYMBOL OF THE WYD

On April 8, 2001, that is, on Palm Sunday, at his Mass in Saint Peter's Square, the Pope will announce the theme of the world days and will give to young Canadian WYD representatives a five-metre-high cross, symbol of the WYD from their very first celebration in 1984. The cross will arrive in Ottawa on Good Friday, 2001 and then will be taken to all the Canadian dioceses. It should be here in the Diocese of Edmundston at the beginning August, 2001 for a five-day period to make the rounds of our five deaneries. The Cross is the symbol of Christ who gathers the young of the world together; it expresses the faith of our youth, and it will follow them on their journey.

### TORONTO PROGRAMME

A preliminary programme indicates that His Eminence Aloysius Cardinal Ambrozic, Archbishop of Toronto, is to preside a Mass on Tuesday, July 23. The Holy Father will arrive on Wednesday the 24<sup>th</sup> and will be staying in Canada until Sunday, July 28. A march is planned to Downsview Park and a vigil with the Pope will take place Saturday, July 27, followed by a Papal Mass to mark the closing of the 2002 World Days of Youth. The program will also include leisure and spiritual activities, and social service. Work is already under way to contact families, schools, and parishes to find lodgings for all these young people. It is estimated that it will cost our youth around two hundred dollars for room and board, while in Toronto.

## TO WHOM ARE THE WYD ADDRESSED?

The World Youth Days are addressed above all to young Catholics 18 to 35 years of age, and to their leaders and those who accompany them. However, people of all ages and all religions may join in as volunteers. All believers, whatever their religion, are invited to join in the activities by simply getting a pass. The WYD are a celebration bringing together young Catholics from 150 countries who wish to celebrate their faith and to better learn of their religion. The joy of being in the presence of the Pope and other young believers makes this a happy time. At Manila in 1995, there were four million young people, in Paris in 1997 there were a million, and in Rome last year there were more than two million of them: the biggest gathering ever to take place in the Eternal City.

## A NEW MILLENNIUM

In the homily marking the closing of the XVI<sup>th</sup> WYD in Rome, Pope John Paul II once again expressed his hope in youth: *«At the close of these World Youth Days, looking at your youthful faces and your sincere enthusiasm, I want to express my heartfelt thanks to God for the gift of youth which abides in the Church and the world, thanks to you. Thanks be to God for the World Youth Days! Thanks be to God for the many young people who have committed themselves [to Christ], throughout these sixteen years! It is the young people who are now adults, who continue to live in faith at home and in their workplace. I am certain that you, too, my dear friends, will carry the torch passed on to you by those who came before. You will take the proclamation of Christ into the new millennium. When you return home, do not disband! Confirm and strengthen your ties with the Christian community which is yours.»*

## SETTING AFIRE!

The Pope continued: *«From Rome, the city of Peter and Paul, the Pope affectionately accompanies you and, paraphrasing an expression of St. Catherine of Sienna, he tells you: 'If you are what you are called to be, you will set the world on fire!' I look with confidence on this new humanity you are forging, I look at this Church ever rejuvenated by the Spirit of Christ who today rejoices at your resolve and your commitment. I look to the future and make mine the words of an ancient prayer which sings of the gift of Jesus, of the Eucharist, and of the Church: 'We thank you, Father, for life and the knowledge you have given us through Jesus, your servant. To you be glory for ever and ever!«*

## FACILITATION

In order to better prepare for the 2002 WYD, in each parish there will be a series of teachings on the WYD theme. Father Thomas Rosica, C.S.B., national coordinator of the 2002 WYD, will meet with all the priests of New Brunswick around August 29.

I shall come back again to this important activity.

*+ François Thibodeau*

+ François Thibodeau  
Bishop of Edmundston

« From A Bishop's Journal » (371) (21 February 2001)