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Challenge for WYD lies in listening to the young people who attend - Nuncio

The Church in Australia will be on show during World Youth Day 2008, and the challenge lies not only in how the event is staged but in how the Church listens to and acts on the experiences of the young people who attend, the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Ambrose De Paoli said today.

In his address to mark the opening of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference Plenary Meeting in Sydney, Archbishop De Paoli noted that preparations for WYD08 and the visit of Pope Benedict XVI were reaching fever pitch.

“No one harbours any doubt as to the quality of the Australian welcome in general which will be extended to the Holy Father, to other Church dignitaries and to the young people and others who come,” he said.

“But the nature of the event, a religious one, a special encounter of the young, through the Church, with the Jesus who came to give us life and life more abundantly, requires something more.”

Archbishop De Paoli said that perhaps the most important part of any World Youth Day was to integrate the experience into the life of the Church.

“What of the core event itself? What overall and particular message did it convey? What follow-up will be given to this message, locally and nationally?” he asked.

“As Church leaders you will have to live in its aftermath, which will come to rest on your doorsteps as principal carers of the faith. It will offer a golden opportunity to look in upon yourselves, a mirror of the Catholicism in general of which you are the principal carers, but in particular as it relates to the young.”

The Nuncio asked whether the young people themselves would be given the opportunity to be heard after WYD, to voice their thoughts and impressions and share the impact that the experience had on them.

“Or will the young be simply invited to a liturgical service to thank them for participating and be told what WYD was about and what is expected of them as a result?”

“There is room and need for something similar, without a doubt. But, is that alone doing justice to the reason for WYD? The Lord was speaking to them too, in various ways, if not principally. And in doing so, he was also speaking to those in the sanctuary, behind the podium or on the stage. This, too, will come to rest on your doorsteps.”

Archbishop De Paoli said that WYD provided an opportunity and a challenge not to be missed or undervalued.

He prayed that the Spirit of the Risen Lord would guide the Bishops in their deliberations and decisions during their Plenary Meeting.

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