

Dear Friends in Christ,

I thank Cardinal Pell for his kind words and I am pleased to have this opportunity to bid farewell to all of you and to say what a wonderful experience this week has been. During these days we have been able to witness at first hand the joy that so many thousands of young people find in their faith, and we have been able to offer praise and thanksgiving to God for his goodness to us. We have had a taste of the warmth and generosity of Australian hospitality, and we have glimpsed something of the glorious scenery of this beautiful continent. It has truly been a week to remember.

None of this would have been possible, though, without a great deal of preparation and sheer hard work during the period leading up to World Youth Day. I want to thank all of you for the generous commitment of time and energy you have made, in order to ensure the smooth running of each of the events we have celebrated together. They have all required careful coordination, involving civil authorities, police and first aid agencies, as well as church personnel and a vast array of volunteers, marshals and stewards. Your efforts have prepared the ground for the Spirit to come down in power, forging bonds of unity and friendship among young people from widely differing backgrounds, and rekindling their love for Jesus Christ and his Church. In the crowds that have assembled here in Sydney we have seen a vivid expression of the unity-in-diversity of the universal Church, a vision in microcosm of the united human family that we long to see. In the power of the Spirit, may these young people make that vision a reality in the world of tomorrow.

I shall have an opportunity at the airport to thank the representatives of the civil authorities. Here I want to express my deep gratitude to all the bishops, priests, men and women religious, chaplains, teachers, lay associations, ecclesial movements, host families, schools and parish communities who have given so much to make World Youth Day a success. I thank particularly Bishop Anthony Fisher and Mr Danny Casey, who have worked so hard to coordinate all the different activities. We read in the Acts of the Apostles that “it is more blessed to give than to receive” (20:35) – but I trust that you will nevertheless have received much from those you have served so generously in the course of our celebrations. To all of you, I say a sincere and heartfelt “thank you”.

As I set off on my journey back to Rome, I shall treasure the memory of the many grace-filled events we have experienced together: from my first encounter with the young people at Barangaroo, through the meetings at Darlinghurst and Saint Mary’s Cathedral, to the Youth Vigil at Southern Cross Precinct and the Final Mass there yesterday. I pray that you too will take many precious memories and spiritual insights away with you, and will return to your homes and families with fresh zeal to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In the power of the Spirit, go forth now to renew the face of the earth!

As I bid you a fond farewell, I commend all of you to the loving intercession of Our Lady of the Southern Cross, Help of Christians, I invoke upon you the sevenfold gifts of the Holy Spirit, and I assure you of my continued prayers. God bless the young people of our world and God bless the people of Australia!

Benedict XVI

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