



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS **GENERAL AUDIENCE** Paul VI Audience Hall

Wednesday, 3 August

2016 [\[Multimedia\]](#)

Journey to Poland, 31st World Youth Day

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

Today I should like to reflect briefly on the Apostolic Journey to Poland that I made in recent days.

The occasion for the Journey was World Youth Day, 25 years after the historic Day celebrated in Chęstochowa shortly after the fall of the “Iron Curtain”. In these 25 years Poland has changed, Europe has changed and the world has changed, and this WYD has become *a prophetic sign* for Poland, for Europe and for the world. The new generation of young people, the heirs and successors continuing the pilgrimage begun by St John Paul II, have given a response to today’s challenge, they have given the sign of hope, and this sign is called *fraternity*. Because, precisely in this world at war, fraternity is needed, closeness is needed, dialogue is needed, friendship is needed. This is the sign of hope: when there is fraternity.

Let us begin precisely with the *young people*, who were the primary reason for the Journey. Once again they have answered the call: they came from all over the world — some of them are even here! [indicating pilgrims in the Hall]. A celebration of colours, of different faces, of languages, of diverse histories. I don’t know how they do it: they speak different languages, but they manage to understand one another! Why? Because they have this willingness to go together, to build bridges, of fraternity. They also came with their wounds, with their questions, but above all with the joy of encountering one another; and once again they formed a mosaic of fraternity. One can speak of a mosaic of fraternity. An emblematic image of World Youth Day is the expanse of multicoloured flags waved by the young people: in effect, at WYD the flags of the nations become more beautiful, as though “they are purified”, and even the flags of nations at war with each other wave near each other. This is beautiful! Here too there are their flags... let them be seen!

In this way, in this great Jubilee meeting of theirs, the young people of the world heard the Message of Mercy, in order to carry it everywhere in spiritual and corporal works. I thank all the young people who came to Krakow! And I thank those who joined us from every part of the Earth!

Because in so many countries, small World Youth Days were held in conjunction with the one in Krakow. May the gift that you have received become a daily response to the Lord's call. A recollection full of affection goes to Susanna, the girl from this Diocese of Rome, who died right after participating in WYD, in Vienna. May the Lord, who has certainly welcomed her into Heaven, comfort her family and friends.

During this Journey I also visited the Shrine of Chęstochowa. Before the icon of Our Lady, I received the gift of the gaze of the Mother who, in a particular way, is the Mother of the people of Poland, of that noble nation that has suffered so much, and with the strength of faith and her maternal hand, has always raised itself again. I greeted several Poles here [in the Hall]. You are good, you are good people!

There, under that gaze, one understands the spiritual sense of the journey of this people, whose history is linked indissolubly to the Cross of Christ. There one touches by hand the faith of the holy faithful People of God, who safeguards hope through trials; and also safeguards the wisdom which is a balance between tradition and innovation, between memory and future. Poland today reminds all of Europe that there can be no future for the continent without its founding values, which in their turn have the Christian vision of mankind at the centre. Among these values is *mercy*, of which two great children of Poland's soil were special apostles: St Faustina Kowalska and St John Paul II.

Lastly, this Journey also had the *horizon of the world*, a world called to respond to the challenge of a "piecemeal" war that is threatening it. Here the profound silence of my visit to Auschwitz-Birkenau was more eloquent than any words. In that silence I listened, I felt, the presence of all the souls that passed by there; I felt the compassion, the mercy of God, that some holy souls were able to take even into that abyss. In that deep silence I prayed for all the victims of violence and of war. And there, in that place, I understood more than ever before the value of remembrance, not only as the recollection of past events, but as monition and responsibility for today and tomorrow, so that the seeds of hatred and of violence do not take root in the furrows of history. Thus in recalling the wars and the many wounds, so much pain that was experienced, there are also many of today's men and women who are suffering due to war, so many of our brothers and sisters. Seeing that cruelty, in that concentration camp, I immediately thought of the cruelty that is similar today: not as concentrated as in that place, but everywhere throughout the world; this world that is ill with cruelty, with pain, with war, with hatred, with sadness. And for this reason I continually ask you to pray: that the Lord give us peace!

For all this I thank the Lord and the Virgin Mary. And once again I express my gratitude to the President of Poland and to the other Authorities, to the Cardinal Archbishop of Krakow and to the entire Polish Episcopate, and to all those who, in a thousand ways, made this event possible, who offered a sign of fraternity and of peace to Poland, to Europe and to the world. I would also like to thank the young volunteers, who worked for over a year to prepare for this event; and also the media, those who work in the media: thank you very much for enabling this Day to be seen

throughout the world. And I cannot forget Anna Maria Jacobini, an Italian journalist who lost her life there unexpectedly. Let us also pray for her: she passed away carrying out her service.

Thank you!

Special greetings:

Tomorrow I shall go to the Papal Basilica of St Mary of the Angels, at the Portiuncula, on the eighth centenary of the “Pardon of Assisi”, which occurred yesterday. It will be a very simple pilgrimage but highly significant in this Holy Year of Mercy. I ask you all to accompany me with your prayers, invoking the light and the strength of the Holy Spirit and the heavenly intercession of St Francis.

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today’s Audience, particularly those from Ireland, Sweden, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, the Philippines, Aruba, Canada and the United States of America. In a special way, I greet the many groups of young people returning from our celebration of World Youth Day. With prayerful good wishes that the present Jubilee of Mercy will be a moment of grace and spiritual renewal for you and your families, I invoke upon all of you joy and peace in our Lord Jesus Christ.

I address a special greeting to *young people*, to *the sick* and to *newlyweds*. Tomorrow we shall celebrate the memory of St John Vianney, patron saint of priests, particularly of parish priests. May his deep humility be an example to you, dear *young people*, to live life as a gift from God; may his trusting abandonment in Christ the Saviour sustain you, dear *sick people*, in your hour of suffering; and may his Christian witness give you courage, dear *newlyweds*, to profess your faith without shame.

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Message of the Holy Father on the occasion of the Olympiad in Rio de Janeiro.

I would now like to address a warm greeting to the people of Brazil, in particular to the city of Rio de Janeiro, which is hosting the athletes and fans from throughout the world for the occasion of the Olympiad. In a world which thirsts for peace, tolerance and reconciliation, I hope that the spirit of the Olympic Games may inspire all, participants and spectators, to fight “the good fight” and to finish the race together (cf. 2 Tim 4:7-8), hoping to obtain as a prize not a medal but something far more precious: the achievement of a civilization in which solidarity reigns, based on the recognition that we are all members of a single human family, independent of differences in culture, skin colour or religion. For the Brazilian people who, with characteristic joy and hospitality, have organized the Celebration of Sports, I hope that this may be an opportunity to overcome

difficult times and to give your all to “work as a team” in order to build a safer and more just country, betting on a future full of hope and joy. May God bless you all!