

WYD as a synodal experience of Church renewal

written by Fr Miguel Angel GARCIA MORCUENDE | August 2, 2023

Interrupting the life of a city is always an extraordinary act. Filling the streets with young people from all corners of the world is a moving memory. A World Youth Day is this and much more.

The organisation of a WYD requires so many hours of work, putting all kinds of resources at the disposal of young people. If it bears spiritual fruit in proportion to the effort, it will have been worth it, all for an educational, communicative and evangelising reason: the objective of an event like this is to make Jesus Christ known to a large number of young people, and to succeed in making them understand that following Him is a sure way to find happiness.

It is to young people that we must look with particular fondness these days and discover the secret of a surprising phenomenon: a “silent revolution” is taking place in the world of youth, whose biggest stage is the World Youth Days. Young people who raise questions among Christians and are not afraid to show themselves as such, young people who do not want to be intimidated let alone deceived, young people who bring enthusiasm and passion to bring about change.

These meetings continue to surprise both inside and outside the Church. And they are a snapshot of a youth that is very different from the one proposed by some, thirsting for values, searching for the deeper meaning of life, with a desire for a different world than the one we found when we arrived.

Today, a significant percentage of WYD participants come from very different family, social and cultural backgrounds. Many of these young pilgrims have no Christian reference points in their own contexts. In this sense, the lives of many of them resemble surfing: they cannot expect to change the wave, but they adapt to it to direct the board where they want it to go. These radiant faces of the Church wake up every day with the desire to be better followers of Jesus among their family, friends and acquaintances.

Young people have the strength to give their best, but they need to know that this commitment is doable, they need the complicity of adults, they need to believe

that this struggle is neither sterile nor doomed to failure. For this reason, the days are a way for young people to experience synodality, the particular style that characterises the life and mission of the Church. Belonging to their local church community implies belonging to a much larger and universal community. A community in which we need everyone, young and old, to 'take charge of the world'.

For this, it is necessary to cultivate certain attitudes for this new synodal spirituality. WYD allows us to:

- share the small stories of others, experiencing the courage to speak freely and bring to the table deep conversations that come from within;
- learn to grow together with others and appreciate how we are adding to each other, even if at different "speeds" (styles, ages, visions, cultures, gifts, charisms and ministries in the Church);
- to take care of the "community green spaces" for our relationship with God, to take care of our connection with the source of life, with the One who takes care of us, to root our trust and our hopes in Him, to unload our worries on Him, to be able to "take charge" of the mission He leaves in our hands;
- to accept and welcome our fragility, which connects us to the fragility of our world and mother Earth;
- to be a voice that joins with many others to denounce the excesses that are currently being committed against the Planet and to take common actions that contribute to the emergence of a more responsible and ecological citizenship;
- to reorient pastoral processes together from a more open and inclusive perspective, making us ready to "go out to meet" all young people where they are, and to make visible and real the desire to be a "Church on the move" that reaches out to believers and non-believers alike, and to become a travelling companion for those who want or need it.

In short, a synodal Church that fosters a change of heart and mind that enables us to approach our mission in JESUS WAY. An invitation to feel within us the touch and gaze of Jesus that always makes us new.

Official WYD 2023 website: <https://www.lisboa2023.org>

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