

JUVENTUTEM

At World Youth Day 2011 in Spain

Report



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(Picture: Marian procession organised by the traditional youth movement *Juventutem* – including 22 English pilgrims – at World Youth Day in Spain on the feast of the Assumption 2011; Celebrant: Fr Armand de Malleray, FSSP; first cleric left: Rev Dominic Savoie, FSSP. Behind: church of the Carmel of Amorebieta, where our liturgies took place during the first week.)

Sunny Youth Day in Spain

Let us idealise *Juventutem's* experience in Spain, it is worth admitting that WYD broadly resembles Purgatory: it is hot, crowded, uncomfortable and involves lots of waiting. Add to this that food could be delicious or dire; that metro stations and access routes could close without notice; that laundry facilities were scarce and pickpockets rife; and one finds a recipe for frustration. But all this is par for the WYD course. It is to be offered up, as was the occasional hostility to the extraordinary form. For like Purgatory, WYD invariably ends in joy. And there is no other body on Earth but the Church which can call nearly two million energetic youth together, neither to earn nor to spend, where neither assaults nor arrests are heard of, but who are come to seek the face of God.

Juventutem registered a thousand pilgrims for World Youth Day 2011 and their participation was a singular success. Not only were these youth able to enjoy the Mass and Office in the traditional form, along with doctrine, devotions, culture and companionship in exactly the same spirit; but all of this was done in the heart of the Church, with the support of bishops, and as a witness which attracted other Catholics and non Catholics. Thus it is not just a blessing for traditionalists to attend WYD; it is a missionary service.

With letters of support from Cardinal Levada, Cardinal Ranjith and Archbishop André Léonard of Brussels, the *Juventutem* group comprised some two dozen clerics of the Priestly Fraternity of Saint Peter, the Good Shepherd Institute, the Canons Regular of the Mother of God (Abbey of Lagrasse), and also one priest from the St Vincent Ferrer Fraternity, a diocesan priest from Paris (bi-ritual parish of Saint Eugène) and a Benedictine from Fontgombault; plus the affiliated youth who over two weeks grew in number from two hundred to one thousand. The English-speaking group was fortunate to be led by Fr Armand de Malleray, Ecclesiastical Assistant of *Juventutem*, assisted by three seminarians from the



Priestly Fraternity of Saint Peter, sent by the two FSSP seminaries in Germany and in America: Rev Dominic Savoie, Rev Xavier Proust and I. Rev Dominic gave us an impressive account of his pilgrimage from Lourdes to Santiago de Compostella, which he had recently completed with other FSSP clerics (and from which he was still recovering).



Daily Mass – always in the Extraordinary Form – was variously Pontifical High, Pontifical Low, Solemn High, Sung or Low. Celebrants included Bishop Marc Aillet of Bayonne; Bishop Dominique Rey of Fréjus-Toulon; and Archbishop Robert Le Gall of Toulouse. The *schola* attracted dozens of volunteers and sang beautifully. Vespers or Compline were on certain days

prayed in common. Several of the laity present were well acquainted with the 1962 Office and many more had wonderful voices for chant. In Bilbao, the local ordinary Bishop Mario Ireta offered (EF) Vespers for us.

The point is often made that Tradition is not, must not, be confined to liturgy. Rather what begins and ends in liturgy must find its expression also in catechesis, in spirituality and the



(Picture left: Rev. James Mawdsley, FSSP – in the wheelchair – giving a talk to the English contingent in Bilbao. Above: blue vestments are a privilege in Spain and Bavaria on Marian feasts: in this case, the Assumption 2011 at Amorabieta; further up: Fr Jean-Cyrille Sow, FSSP with our young people during a walk – the sea can be seen left of the flag.)

whole catholic life. This is precisely the achievement of *Juventutem's* WYD 2011 pilgrimage. Besides Mass, Confession and the Office, there were frequent doctrinal talks plus opportunities for devotions, spiritual guidance, elevating conversation, cultural enrichment, trips to the countryside and entertainment which was (often if not always) also edifying.

The EF liturgy promoted by *Juventutem* expresses truth as shining through beauty, and Spain's vast architectural and pictorial patrimony was the ideal setting for a teaching on beauty. At the 'Museo de Bellas Artes' in Bilbao and at the 'Prado' in Madrid, Fr de Malleray led three well attended tours on sacred art and gave a presentation of the façade of the Church of the Incarnation in Bilbao.

Juventutem conferences included reflections on Pope Benedict's message for WYD (see *Col* 2:7); catechism on the Mass, the Holy Eucharist, the Four Last Things, the Divine Office, Divine Revelation, Marian Dogmas, the scapular and philosophy. Bishops gave catechism, and invited speakers addressed *Juventutem* on varied topics, for example on Gregorian chant or on satanic expression through pop culture. Guest speaker Dominique Morin gave a moving testimony on his progressive liberation from addiction to violence, drugs and sexual disorder through a life of piety sustained by the liturgy (he is now an Oblate from a traditional Benedictine monastery).

We began in Bilbao, Basque country, for the 'days in the diocese', comparable to a week-long Catholic summer camp. Here we visited the birthplace and shrine of St Ignatius of Loyola. Born in a fortified tower, St Ignatius turned his combative energies to the greater glory of God. We also learned more about his dear friend St Francis Xavier, reckoned by some as the greatest missionary since St Paul. Later in that first week our group hiked up a mountain to a shrine in Urkiola National Park. Here the bishop of Bilbao gave *Juventutem* a warm welcome. There was also a stunning walk along the Biscay coast. Before making a trip to Guernica we remembered the 498 Spanish Martyrs beatified by Pope Benedict and heard an interview account of the Spanish Civil War.

On the Solemnity of the Assumption, August 15th, Mass was offered in blue vestments – a liturgical privilege for Spain and Bavaria on feasts of Our Lady. A Marian procession followed. We then embarked on buses bound for Madrid. As the lush landscape of the mountainous north gave way to the arid and



(Picture above: our English-speakers came from every continent. Below: doctrinal talk by Fr de Malleray, FSSP at Azpeitia, birthplace of St Ignatius Loyola and a major Jesuit shrine.
Bottom: solemn high Mass by Fr Sow, FSSP at Amorabieta.)

windblown *Meseta* plateau, the PA system on the bus was used to give an account of the longest war in history—the 770 years of the Reconquista. Spain is the only country to have freed herself from long-term Islamic occupation. The fight-back began with the holy warrior Pelayo and his thirty comrades holed up in a cave on the northern coast. Decade by decade, century by century, the Spanish fought their way south. From our southbound bus the miles represented the years. We gazed out at the baked villages, the fields whose wheat was already gathered and those where sunflowers were just beginning to stretch to the sky. Eventually we heard of Queen Isabella the Catholic, perhaps the greatest Christian monarch, who completed the Reconquista with the taking of Granada in 1492.

Mindful of this great history, we were mindful also of being among over a million youth streaming toward Madrid to see the Vicar of Christ, to hear the Holy Father. The bus journey afforded time to pray, time to chat and lots of singing. Only the exhausted were able to



sleep. We stopped in Burgos to visit the huge Gothic-Roman cathedral. Alas most of the cathedral was closed, but the atmosphere for WYD was picking up as we encountered other pilgrims. It was a delight also to see a mighty, bronze statue of *El Cid*—‘My lord, the Champion’—his beard as big as a bear, his face as hard as his helmet, his great sword pointed straight forward with all the steely determination of his charging warhorse. We had just heard his biography on the bus.

Madrid also offered endless edification. Unmatched for internal glory was the *Basílica de San Francisco el Grande* – a suitable monument to the internal glory of St Francis. Also inspiring was the Prado – free entry to WYD pilgrims. But certainly the greatest treat of those days in Madrid was to be there in streets heaving with joyful Catholics from all over the world, presided over by *el Papa*. Within no time we encountered groups from Chile, Korea, Bavaria, Australia, Malawi, China, the Congo, Italy, Costa Rica and so forth. One can read about the universality of the Church; one can marvel at it in the abstract; but it is another thing to experience it. The wonder of universality lies in its double-nature of ubiquity sprung from unity. For it is nothing special for a group to be large if it is disparate; nor any wonder for a group to be united if it is small. But what is astonishing, and moreover what lies only in the power of God, is to assemble a vast multitude which on the surface is diverse yet in its depths is One. WYD gives a unique experience of this wonder.

In fact in this regard the *Juventutem* group stands out. Most groups who attend WYD come from a single diocese, or perhaps a Province of a Religious Order. They are geographically defined. The members of the



(Picture top: Excursion to a coastal shrine in the Basque Country. Below: Bishop Mario Iceta of Bilbao presided at EF pontifical Vespers for *Juventutem* – ‘for the first time in his life’ as he told us. Bottom: our pilgrims greet the Holy Father after the Stations of the Cross in Madrid.)



Juventutem group however came from the whole face of the Earth. The English-speaking busload had representatives from not only a dozen different countries but from all six continents.

Each nation made its own contribution to the whole. The French provided the great majority of our numbers, including most of the clerics and thanks to them we had the glorious Masses. Whoever does not thank God for France neglects reality. The North Americans provided technology not just for external communications (informing the Internet of our activities) but also internal communications – very important when lost in vast crowds! Americans bring a can-do-attitude. One proposed and carried out the printing of hundreds of booklets for *Juventutem*’s use





at the Papal Vigil of the Divine Office from Saturday Vespers to Sunday Prime, helpfully including the necessary neumes. It was perhaps thanks also to Canadian and American fashion-setting that more and more mantillas appeared as the fortnight unfolded.

On the *Metro* an Australian was caught with her two companions between ferocious Spanish atheists shouting hatred at the WYD pilgrims one on side, and on the other side ferocious Spanish WYD pilgrims exercising their right to return the attack in like manner. Aware of our summons to Christ, she called the pilgrims to pray instead. Alas Spanish testosterone was not ready to hear, so she prayed with her two friends instead.

Likewise some of *Juventutem's* British pilgrims were surrounded by anti-Church protests in the Plaza Puerta del Sol – where all Spain's roads meet. Spat upon by atheists, socialists and perverts, the pilgrims knelt and prayed. How this ravishes the heart of God! English pilgrims also organised a whip-round of several hundred Euros for four of our *Juventutem* pilgrims from the developing world who, after selling scapulars to subsidise their trip, needed extra



(Picture above: Archbishop Le Gall of Toulouse catechizes the *Juventutem* pilgrims in Madrid during EF pontifical solemn high Mass. He told members of staff that he was pleased to use the EF liturgy since the Holy Father had fully approved of it. Picture below: anti-Catholic activists burn a WYD t-shirt to intimidate *Juventutem* pilgrims praying the rosary. Right: fire we did light up as well, but of a different kind, since *Juventutem* had been put in charge of one of the huge tents where Eucharistic adoration was to take place all night after the papal Vigil – a most welcome duty for us, since our emblem is precisely a monstrance.)



help to stay on in Spain for another week.

And of all the contributions made from *Juventutem's* various nations, perhaps it was the Nigerians who pleased God the most. So quiet and reserved like Our blessed Mother; such wells of silent humility; such examples of modesty in dress; hardship borne without complaint; gently wondering why our group did not always stop at the proper times to pray the Angelus; surely these are the last who will be first? A special tribute must be given to Fr Anthony Sumich, from the FSSP personal parish in Nigeria, who fought tirelessly to have all the paperwork, visas and money collected for *Juventutem Nigeria* to be with us.

Ultimately the defining moment of WYD 2011 came at the vigil before the Blessed Sacrament. As a million and a half pilgrims gathered at Cuatro Vientos airport during a roasting hot day, there were portents of a storm. Umbrellas and roll-mats were seen cruising at 500-feet, being carried far away by strong winds. Sharp-eyed pilgrims spotted threatening clouds on the horizon. As the evening drew on the probability of tempest became a certainty. The Holy Father was enthroned in the sanctuary. Five young adults finished putting five excellent questions to him. But the world did not want us to hear his answers. As a microphone was placed before Pope Benedict, the darkness suddenly broke into rage. Vicious winds tore off his zucchetto, possibly his glasses too; rain soaked his hand-held speech. Hundreds of

pilgrims began screaming, running for shelter, deserting the airfield. There was a sense of Apocalypse. What would our 84-year-old *papa* do?

The Pope remained seated. He did not shift. Some pilgrims began singing. Many more had recourse to the Rosary. After some minutes, unable to deliver his prepared speech, the Pope smiled and used the microphone to thank the pilgrims for their joy and

resistance. "Today you have prayed for water," remarked an announcer, "Now you have it!"

The storm abated and a deacon began reading the Gospel. Furious the storm returned, forcing an interruption... but the Word prevailed. The elements fell silent. Now arose from under the sanctuary a 12-foot tall structure of silver and gold, exquisite in its detail, that magnificent monstrance commissioned 500 years ago by Cardinal Cisneros and carried every year on Corpus Christi through the streets of Toledo. So Our Lord, really and substantially present in the most Blessed Sacrament, was enthroned for adoration. Maybe there has never on the face of the Earth been anything quite like the silence which followed. You know what it is like when three people are silent.

You may know what it is like when one thousand people are silent. The depth of silence increases with the number of people taking part in it. Thus when well over a million people kneel in almost complete silence for prolonged minutes, then that silence carries all – it seemed – to God.



After we sang the *Tantum ergo* the Lord of Creation was reposed. The stunning Toledo monstrance sank back beneath the floor of the sanctuary. And as the last few inches of its towered top vanished from our sight, the first drops of rain resumed falling. The storm returned to vent all its sorry anger on the un-budging pilgrims.

This is what happened at WYD Madrid – whether we regard it as a story of the elements; or a story of protests; or of salvation history; this is what happened – the Word was proclaimed, the elements raged, the Rock stayed firm, the Church clung to the Rock, the storm spent itself, Our Lord appeared and was adored, filled with joy His

(Picture top: Exhausted and generous *Juventutem* pilgrims kneeling during Eucharistic adoration at the papal Vigil, after a first part of the storm. Above and right: *FSSP* and *Juventutem* flags during papal Vigil and Mass. Below: a sudden rain in the sales of mantillas coincided with the presence of *Juventutem* in Spain...



Church endured the darkness and the darkness was overcome. Morning came and it was time for the heavenly banquet.

Some trads scorn WYD. But here were some million souls who had made varying sacrifices to see the Vicar of Christ and to honour God. They were friendly; many expressed their interest in Tradition; they showed delight in seeing habits, cassocks and collars; were attracted to join us by the sight and prayers of the Mass of Ages, in praying the Office in all its richness. Youths with diocesan groups said they wished they had travelled with *Juventutem* – and this not solely because generous LMS sponsorship made it a bargain. WYD is a mission field and these souls are hungry.

And there are millions more hungry souls here in England. So Fr de Malleray emphasised the importance of young

traditionally-minded people committing to their Catholic faith and evangelising *hic et nunc*, on a daily and local basis. Otherwise WYD becomes an impressive firework display every two or three years with nothing in between. This same point is clear in the theme chosen by Pope Benedict for the next WYD in Rio 2013: "Go and make disciples of all nations" (Mt 28:19). Clearly as Tradition deepens at WYD, then Tradition deepens in the whole world. *Gracias a Dios!* □

