

A first look at the Australian pilgrims
to World Youth Day 2008
Preliminary survey findings



Michael Mason
Andrew Singleton
Ruth Webber

Working paper 2
Pilgrims' Progress 2008 Research Project
on World Youth Day Sydney 2008

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Michael Mason
Andrew Singleton
Ruth Webber

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Executive Summary

The research

The *Pilgrims' Progress 2008* research project is studying, before, during and after the event, the experiences of English-speaking pilgrims who attended World Youth Day (WYD) 2008 in Sydney. The methods used were interviews, participant observation and two large-scale internet surveys of pilgrims: one before and the other after WYD.

Young Australian Catholics

Eighty percent of the Australian pilgrims were under 36 years of age. This paper deals exclusively with these young Australians. Almost half of them were school-age (14-18). Only 7% of those aged up to 35 had been to a previous World Youth Day.

How participants rated their World Youth Day experience

Participants rated the experience of attending WYD very highly: seven out of ten considered it 'one of the best experiences of my life' or even 'a life-changing event'. Asked what they found most fun, pilgrims chose being part of the huge, happy crowd walking together through the streets, and making new friends. Most had few complaints about the inconveniences; but delays, food, registration and toilet facilities drew comments.

What was most spiritually helpful

What pilgrims found most spiritually helpful from their participation in World Youth Day was the experience of Church: sensing that God was present in this large gathering of people sharing and celebrating the same faith; feeling themselves part of a community that transcended them in space and time and fused them into a unity with others and with God.

Which events had the most impact

Of the five major large-group events, the Vigil, the Mass with Pope Benedict and the Stations of the Cross stood out as those most often described by pilgrims as occasions of strong experiences of the presence of God, and also as most spiritually helpful. Among the other activities, those that were judged most helpful were the morning catecheses, the pilgrim walk, taking part in a service of adoration, receiving the sacrament of Reconciliation, and the 'Receive the Power Live' concert. The catecheses appear to have played a more important role at WYD08 than at previous WYDs, and proved to be a highlight of the week for some participants.

Follow-up activities favoured by the pilgrims

Asked about the activities they felt would be most beneficial as a follow-up to WYD, over half the respondents chose first: 'retreats / camps for people who want to grow in faith'; there was also strong support for regular get-togethers with other WYD pilgrims, for more youth-oriented Masses, and high-quality teaching of the Catholic faith. Over half of the group were very keen to attend the next WYD in Madrid. Almost fifteen hundred of the survey participants contributed comments or suggestions as feedback to the WYD organizers.

Outcomes of participation in WYD

Respondents reported changes in beliefs, attitudes and behaviour which they attributed to their participation in WYD. Over 40% stated that their faith in God had been strengthened, and that they had a closer relationship with Jesus. A third or more stated that they were now not embarrassed to let others see that they believed; that they wanted to live as disciples of Jesus; that they wanted to learn more about their faith. Over half of the respondents said that they were determined to change their behaviour towards others – to be more considerate, more 'Christ-like'. Smaller, but significant proportions reported changed attitudes and behaviour on a range of social-ethical issues.

1. Introduction

The 'Pilgrims' Progress 2008' research project

Pilgrims' Progress 2008 is a research project being conducted at Australian Catholic University and Monash University, with the support of World Youth Day Administration, focusing on the pilgrims who attended World Youth Day in Sydney in July 2008, who registered for catechesis in English (for many, not their first language). The time and resources available did not permit a multi-lingual study of the whole population of pilgrims. The project studied the experiences of these English-speaking pilgrims before, during and after World Youth Day (WYD), seeking to discover what WYD08 meant for them and what outcomes it has had for them personally, and also exploring the Christian community-building effect of WYD.

The members of the research team are Rev Dr Michael Mason and Professor Ruth Webber from Australian Catholic University and Dr Andrew Singleton from Monash University.

The project comprises three stages. In stage I (the period leading up to WYD), interviews and a large-scale survey were conducted to discover what pilgrims hoped for from WYD08, how they prepared for it, and other aspects of their spirituality and background.

The interviews took place in late 2007 and the first few months of 2008. A total of 49 interviews were conducted: 36 interviewees were attending school in 2007, and 13 were older, either in the workforce or at university. Thirty-one were female and 18 were male.

The pre-WYD survey was conducted via the internet from May 2 to 15, 2008. Participants who had registered with WYD Administration by then were sent invitations by an independent internet survey company, inviting them to 'Have Your Say' by browsing to a dedicated website and recording their responses. The survey was anonymous – no identifying personal information was asked, and 12,275 responses were received.

Stage II of the research project was conducted during the WYD08 week: the team, temporarily expanded to twelve members by the inclusion of several international and local collaborators, travelled to Sydney and attended all of the major WYD events and many of the minor ones. Data were gathered by means of participant observation (later recorded in field notes), and via brief interviews, photography, and informal conversations.

A key research strategy during the WYD08 week was for research team members each to 'embed' themselves with a different group of pilgrims. In most cases, these were groups of school-age youth from schools where the team had conducted Stage I interviews. The team member accompanied these youth at their daily catecheses, during the Opening Mass, the Papal arrival ceremony, the other major celebrations up to and including the Closing Mass, and also at other youth festival events. We ate meals with them and travelled with them from location to location. This strategy enabled the team to observe first-hand what pilgrims were doing at different WYD08 events and to have on-going conversations with them about their WYD experience. This stage in Sydney was concluded by the research team coming together for debriefing sessions.

Stage III of the project began with 27 individual interviews and two focus group meetings with returned pilgrims, many of whom we had interviewed in stage I of the research and accompanied during WYD08 week. The aim of this stage was to understand the impact WYD08 had on participants' sense of identity as Catholics, on their personal religious beliefs, attitudes and practices, and on their level of civic engagement. The post-WYD internet survey was launched in the third week of November and remained open until December 18, 2008. While all available means were employed to contact, and enlist the participation of those who had attended World Youth Day and registered as English speakers, many email addresses provided at registration six months or more previously were either no longer working, or were not being cleared by their owners. A total of 4,776 responses were received from English-speaking pilgrims.

The reader may sometimes wonder, on seeing one of the questions asked in the survey after WYD: 'Why on earth did they ask *that* particular question?' The research team believe there were good reasons behind all the questions. They were not developed merely on theoretical grounds, but also on the basis of young people's experiences of WYD, which the team had learned from the following sources:

- the interviews before WYD, in late 2007 and early 2008
- the internet survey before WYD, in May 2008, and analysis of those data
- the team's participant observation at WYD, and numerous conversations there with pilgrims
- lengthy interviews with participants after they returned from WYD
- a pretest of the post-WYD survey involving over 100 participants who not only answered the questions, but were provided with the capacity to comment on them, and did so, sometimes at length.

As will be fully explained in our final report, there are strong grounds for confidence in the 'representativeness' of both the pre- and post-WYD surveys – that is, findings based on the surveys can be generalised to the whole body of pilgrims who registered as English-speaking.

Purpose and scope of this second working paper

The purpose of this paper is to provide a 'first look' at findings on the Australian young people who attended WYD to the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference and to Church groups and agencies concerned with youth ministry. An earlier paper was prepared for World Youth Day Administration, especially as an aid to Bishop Fisher and Mr. Casey in participating in the International Preparatory Meeting of WYD organisers convened by the Pontifical Council for the Laity in Rome in early April, 2009. In that paper, findings were presented for pilgrims from all nationalities considered together. In this second paper, the findings presented are still preliminary, but the focus is on the young Australian participants.

The paper details some preliminary findings from the post-WYD survey of pilgrims, with a selection of quotations from interviews or write-in responses in the survey, to add some flesh to the bare bones of numbers. Because there were few non-Catholic attenders, and because interest naturally focuses on the WYD 'target age-group' of young people up to 35, this paper will deal only with Catholics aged 14-35. Although 35 is a bit long in the tooth to be considered 'youth', we will, for convenience, refer to the 14-35 group as 'Catholic youth' (usually Cyouth for short). About 20% of the Australian participants were over 35 years of age. Since many Australian pilgrims were school-age, a considerable proportion of these older attenders would have been teachers or parents who accompanied them. The

experiences of this older group are also of great interest – often they were different from those of the students – and we will examine their responses in our final report. But in this paper, in order to provide a brief and rapid report, we consider only the ‘youth’.

So in what follows, ‘attenders’ refers only to Australian Catholics up to 35 years of age.

The style of presentation is broad and general, descriptive rather than analytical. For example, one in four participants rated their WYD experience ‘life-changing’. Like most of the preliminary findings reported here, this raises new and most interesting questions begging to be explored: for example: *who* were those who found the experience life-changing? What was their spiritual background? Were they previously highly committed to their faith and involved in the life of the Church? What parts or aspects of WYD did they feel contributed most to their experience? Has the experience had lasting impact? What aspects of their lives are different now? How do they now participate in the Church? How is their faith supported? What do they consider would be the most beneficial follow-up to WYD? There are survey and interview data designed to answer all these questions, and analyses of this kind will be pursued in our final report. Here, our focus is limited to an *initial* description of the experiences of pilgrims from Australia.

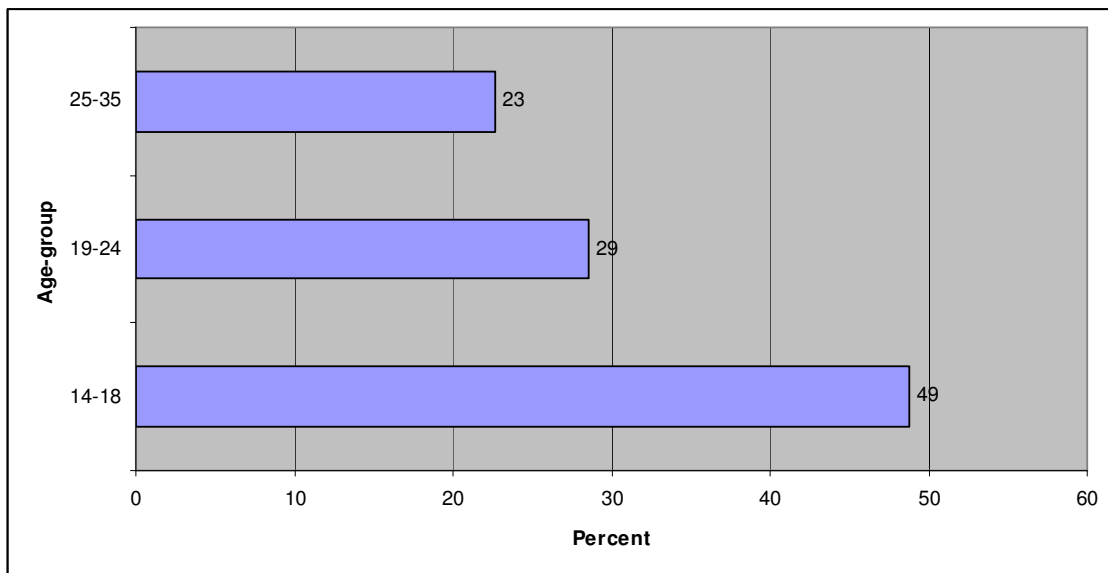
Who went to World Youth Day?

WYD Administration estimated that 150,000 attended the Opening Mass; 400,000 were at Randwick for the concluding Papal Mass, while perhaps as many as half a million came out to welcome the Pope at his official arrival, as he toured the city by ferry and motorcade. Those who wished to receive pilgrim services such as meals and accommodation, or to be admitted to the main venues, had to register online in advance. The official record showed over 223,000 registered pilgrims: 113,000 Australian and 110,000 from 193 overseas nations.

The Australian pilgrims

Age

Figure 1.1 Catholics aged 14-35 (Cyouth): Age groups (%).



How to read this chart: 49% of Australian participants were aged between 14 and 18

Australian Catholic ‘youth’ – those under age 36 for whom WYD was primarily designed, fall into the three major age-groups shown in Figure 1.1 above:

- those mostly still at school (aged 14 to 18): 49%
- emerging adults (aged 19-24) engaged in tertiary education or in their first years in the workforce: 29%
- and young adults aged 25-35: 23%.

The school age group was by far the largest, as one would expect. Attendance was easier for them: in many dioceses very vigorous efforts were made throughout the Catholic school system to recruit them; their schools or parishes organised the trip; teachers and parents accompanied and supervised them; costs were partially or in some cases fully subsidised by the school or the diocese. Older attenders who were engaged in tertiary studies or working had to make much more of a sacrifice: arranging for time off from work or study, in some cases losing some income, and having to meet their own expenses for travel, accommodation and registration.

Diocese

Where did the Australian pilgrims come from? Each diocese has information from its own WYD office, and from WYD registration, on the total number of registered pilgrims of all ages from the diocese who attended WYD. Some pilgrims may also have attended parts of WYD without registering. Dioceses can also estimate how many of the registered pilgrims would have been school-age young people, and compare that figure with their diocesan Catholic school population which they know from Catholic Education Office and Commonwealth Census figures.

For the purposes of this report, focussing on youth aged up to 35, it is of great interest to ask: what proportion of each diocese’s Catholic youth in this age bracket attended WYD? This was calculated as follows:

- 1) From Government census information, the number of Catholics in each diocese in the age range 15-34 was calculated.¹
- 2) From the diocesan totals of registered attenders of all ages provided to dioceses by WYD, the proportion aged 15-34 was calculated.
- 3) The number of attenders aged 15-34 from each diocese was divided by number of Catholics aged 15-34 in the diocese, and the result expressed as a percentage. We conclude:

- Sydney archdiocese: 20% of Catholics aged 15-34 from the archdiocese attended WYD as registered pilgrims
- Parramatta, Broken Bay, Wollongong: 8-14%
- Melbourne, Sandhurst, Sale, Wagga, Broome: 3-4%:
- All other dioceses: 1-2%
- Australia as a whole: 6%.

¹ The publicly available information from the Australian Census is, after each census, compiled to match diocesan and parish boundaries in the National Catholic Census Project, conducted by the ACBC Pastoral Projects Office (<http://www.ppo.Catholic.org.au/>). In the figures cited above, the WYD ‘target age range’ of 14-35 has had to be trimmed slightly to 15-34 to fit the age categories available from the census.

It seems likely that a considerable additional number of young people attended some events (especially the Stations of the Cross and the Closing Mass) without being fully registered. Some of these may have come from dioceses outside the Sydney area, but a high proportion were most likely from Sydney.

These figures put WYD in realistic perspective: a significant proportion of young Catholics from dioceses in the Sydney area were able to participate in WYD; from other dioceses, the proportion was quite small. In these dioceses, returned pilgrims will not find so many in their school, parish or neighbourhood who shared the WYD experience.

Gender

Sixty-eight percent of respondents were female, 32% male, a ratio of more than 2:1. WYD attracted many more young women than young men.

Table 1.1 shows the proportion of males and females within each of the 3 age-groups. In the school-age group (14-18) 73% were girls; only 27% boys. Amongst the older pilgrims also, there were more men than women, but the ratio was less extreme: just over 2:1.

Table 1.1 Cyouth: Gender by age-group (% of age-group).

GENDER	AGE-GROUP			
	14-18	19-24	25-35	All
Male	27%	35%	38%	32%
Female	73%	65%	62%	68%

Table 1.2 shows the age makeup of each gender group: just over half the female participants and 42% of the males were of school age; for both genders, the remainder were fairly equally distributed between the post-school age group (19-24) and the group of older youth (25-35).

Table 1.2 Cyouth: Age-group by gender (% of gender).

AGE-GROUP	Male	Female	Total
14-18 yrs	42%	52%	49%
19-24	31%	27%	29%
25-35	27%	21%	23%
Total	100%	100%	100%

How to read this table: 42% of males were aged 14-18 yrs, vs. 52% of females.

Why were there so many more girls than boys in the school-age group, and more women than men overall? We think we know some of the reasons, but are open to further suggestions, and will explore this tantalising and important question in later publications.

Friends

Just over a quarter of the attenders did not have any of their closest friends with them; but nearly three-quarters came with one or more. School age pilgrims were a little more likely than older participants to have a friend or two with them.

2. The Road to Sydney: Preparing for WYD 2008

In early February 2008, 27-year-old 'Peter'² said in an interview that Sydney WYD would be his third World Youth Day, after Rome in 2000 and Toronto in 2002. Peter had been busy with his Sydney preparations: he was a group leader, and was heavily involved in the Pilgrim Partnership Support Program, having raised \$10,000 to help support overseas pilgrims to make the journey to Sydney. He was also involved in playing music when the World Youth Day Cross and Icon toured his home city. Attending previous World Youth Days had proved enormously helpful to Peter in strengthening his own Catholic identity, and he was hoping that Sydney WYD would have the same impact on younger pilgrims. He said:

I reckon there [will be] school kids who are going who think they're going to go on a big holiday. And I reckon that it'll really, like for people who go to these things and think oh, 'It's just going to be a holiday', I think that they, a lot of the time come back and go wow, that was so much more than a holiday. And I think it's going, as a trickle-down effect from that, people will start to go to church and stuff. I'm not saying it's the answer to all the problems in the world, but I think it's a very good injection of spirituality and everything.

Peter himself was also looking forward particularly to the devotional, teaching and religious elements of WYD08. How typical of Australian attenders is Peter? How many others had been to previous World Youth Days? How many others had undertaken as many preparatory activities?

Many of the post WYD survey participants also completed the extensive survey conducted prior to WYD, and by drawing on these data we are able to describe how people prepared for WYD 2008.

Attendance at previous World Youth Days

Only 7% of Australian Catholic youth (14-35 yrs) had attended a previous World Youth Day. The 2008 WYD, at which the majority of pilgrims were Australian, is most likely unique in having the lowest proportion of participants who had attended a previous WYD since the series of International World Youth Days began.

Those who said they had attended one or more previous WYDs were asked: 'Which World Youth Days did you attend before going to Sydney? Please check all the earlier ones you've been to.' The percentages in the following table are based on the number who had attended a previous celebration.

Table 2.1 Cyouth who had attended a previous WYD: World Youth Day attended (% of all who had attended a previous WYD).

Previous WYD	% of previous attenders
Cologne, Germany, 2005	69%
Toronto, Canada, 2002	26%
Rome, Italy, 2000	20%
Paris, France, 1997	4%
Manila, Philippines, 1995	3%
Denver, USA, 1993	2%

² All names of interviewees are pseudonyms.

How to read this table: 69% of those at WYD08 who had attended a previous WYD, had attended the one in Cologne in 2005. People may have attended more than one previous WYD, so the question permitted multiple responses. Hence the percentages add to more than 100.

Sixty-nine percent of those who had been to a previous WYD had gone to Cologne, and a quarter had been to Toronto. Among these past pilgrims, 'Feeling part of a large crowd united by shared beliefs' was rated on average as the most important experience at the most recent WYD they had attended. All of the Cologne pilgrims whom we interviewed face-to-face commented on the profound feeling of unity shared among the million plus pilgrims in attendance at the Papal Mass.

Almost three-quarters of those who had been to a previous WYD had attended a follow-up gathering and stayed in regular contact with friends they had made (often via Facebook and email). In other words, most of those choosing to go again had maintained some connections to other pilgrims since the previous WYD.

Deciding to attend and preparatory activities

The World Youth Day Administration, along with diocesan WYD offices, Catholic organisations, schools and parishes, put considerable effort into encouraging Australian Catholic youth to attend WYD. Talks at schools and churches were presented by past pilgrims, promotional DVDs were distributed widely and other recruiting events organised.

We asked each of the 49 pilgrims we interviewed prior to WYD 2008: 'Can you remember the point at which you decided you definitely wanted to go to WYD? What most helped you decide to go?'. Some answers cited several factors; others said simply: 'my friends are going.' Exploring this issue further in the pre-WYD survey, we asked: '*Besides your own attraction to the idea of going, which of the following really helped you decide to attend WYD in 2008.*' Up to 10 reasons could be selected from a list including:

- Your friends are going
- People at school or parish encouraged you to go
- Talking personally to someone who had attended a previous WYD
- Seeing a DVD about WYD
- Hearing a presentation from a previous attender
- Information on the WYD Website.

Making a decision is a complex process; survey participants were able to select as many of these influences as they liked. Three items stood out particularly as really helping people decide: 'people at school or parish encouraged you to go' (56% nominated this as helping them decide); 'your friends are going' (49%); 'seeing a DVD about WYD' (48%). Among the interviewees, many mentioned that it was personal encouragement from a respected leader, teacher or past pilgrim that helped them make their decision, rather than simply watching the WYD promotional DVD or seeing a presentation. Nineteen-year-old university student Grace described the encouragement she received from a woman in her parish:

Jane, who's the organiser with [parish], constantly sends emails out, yeah, and so there's always information like and research and there's also the website that I've logged on to ... so she really wants us three to attend 'cause we're part of the older group. The others who are attending are a bit younger so they really want us to kind of, I don't know, like become the older sisters I guess within the group.

There are important age differences in response to these survey items: teens (those aged 14-18) were significantly more likely than those aged 19-24 or 25-35 to rate 'encouragement from people at school or their parish', 'friends', or 'watching the DVD' as really helping them deciding to attend WYD 2008. For example, 57% of those aged 14-18 rated 'your friends are going' as an important deciding factor, compared to just 28% of those aged 25-35. For the older pilgrims, other personal and religious factors seem to be at play, including, for almost a third of them, their positive experience at a past WYD.

We also asked in the pre-WYD survey about the range of preparatory activities pilgrims had undertaken. This could include: watching the promotional DVD, undertaking fundraising or awareness activity, signing up as a volunteer for WYD or Days in the Diocese, or participating in a 'Holy Hour of Power'. Pilgrims could nominate all of the activities they had undertaken; the average number of activities for all pilgrims was almost five.

The three most commonly undertaken preparatory activities, by far, were:

- Seeing a DVD about WYD (79% of the respondents had done this)
- Attending a WYD information session at school, university or parish (76%)
- Participating in some activity related to the Journey of the Cross and Icon (75%).

Most of the pilgrims aged 14-35, regardless of age, had undertaken these three preparatory steps on the road to Sydney.

At the time of the survey, no-one had participated in the Days in the Diocese. But in the survey conducted after WYD, 9% of pilgrims rated the Days in the Diocese as the most spiritually helpful event outside the five main events at WYD 2008.

Advance hopes and expectations

Next attention turns to hopes and expectations for the event. Our pre-WYD survey respondents were asked: 'What are you most looking forward to experiencing at WYD?' The answer options offered were widely varied, from things like experiencing the presence of God, seeing the Pope, participating in the Masses and prayer services, to just feeling the support of a large crowd of fellow-believers, and making new friends. Respondents were asked to place the list of possible experiences in rank order. They ranked these items from 1 – what they most hoped to experience, down to 10 – what they were least interested in experiencing.

Our data reveal that some aspects of the up-coming WYD experience appealed to all: seeing the Pope, wanting to experience the presence of God and to feel 'part of a large crowd united by shared beliefs' were among the highest priorities for all of the pilgrims. And contrary to a view expressed in many secular conversations about WYD, pilgrims did not see WYD as an opportunity to 'hook-up'. 'Perhaps meeting someone I really like' was the lowest priority for all of the age groups.

But there are also some differences between the age groups, which stand out when we compare the average ranking given to just two of the items pilgrims were looking forward to: 'Masses and prayer services' and 'Just the buzz of being part of a huge youth event'. The average rank for each of the three main age groups is shown in Table 2.2 below:

Table 2.2 Cyouth: ‘What are you most looking forward to experiencing at WYD?’ by age groups (average ranks).

Looking forward to:	Age Group: Average rank for each item			
	14-18	19-24	25-35	All
Just the buzz of being part of a huge youth event	4.6	6.0	6.4	5.3
Masses and Prayer services	6.6	5.2	4.5	5.8

A ranking of 1 is the highest possible, so when the 14-18-year-olds give an average rank of 4.6 to ‘just the buzz of being part of a huge youth event’, they are putting it closer to their ‘number one priority’ than the oldest group, whose average rank for it was 6.4. In contrast, the teenagers ranked the Masses and prayers services (average 6.6) as a lower priority compared to the two older groups (5.2 for the 19-24-year-olds and 4.5 for the 25-35-year-olds respectively).

Generally, the older pilgrims were somewhat more interested in the devotional and religious aspects of WYD: the Masses, catecheses, and prayer services. The youngest group were more attracted to the youthful aspects of the event: making new friends, feeling the ‘buzz’, and sharing their faith with other young people. Importantly, however, the teens also ranked highly ‘experiencing the presence of God’ and ‘seeing the Pope’. Only a minority of the youthful Australian pilgrims went hoping simply to have a good time.

Expectations for the event were strongly conditioned by levels of personal religiosity. Those who attended Mass either ‘not at all’ or ‘only at Christmas or Easter’ gave the highest ranking to ‘the buzz of being part of a huge youth event’, whereas those who attended ‘weekly or more often’ gave the highest ranking to ‘experiencing the presence of God’. Overall, the older two pilgrim groups are somewhat more religious (in terms of frequency of prayer, attendance at Mass, etc.) than the teenage pilgrims, which sheds further light on some of the differences by age noted above.

Another key set of questions we asked of survey respondents was about the benefits they hoped for as a result of attending WYD08. The respondents were asked ‘*When World Youth Day is all over, what benefits do you hope for as a result of attending?*’ Then followed a list of benefits from which they could select any they felt were applicable to them. The benefits were:

- Getting your faith and your life more together: living what you believe
- A closer relationship with God, with Jesus
- A deeper understanding of Catholic beliefs and moral teachings
- A fuller acceptance of these beliefs and moral teachings
- A stronger sense of Catholic identity
- A greater commitment to social justice
- Feeling the energy to get more involved in your parish.

The top three benefits hoped for were: Getting your faith and your life more together: living what you believe (85% of survey respondents hoped for this benefit), a closer relationship with God (81%) and a stronger sense of Catholic identity (78%). There is very little variation by age: these were the top three priorities for pilgrims of all ages.

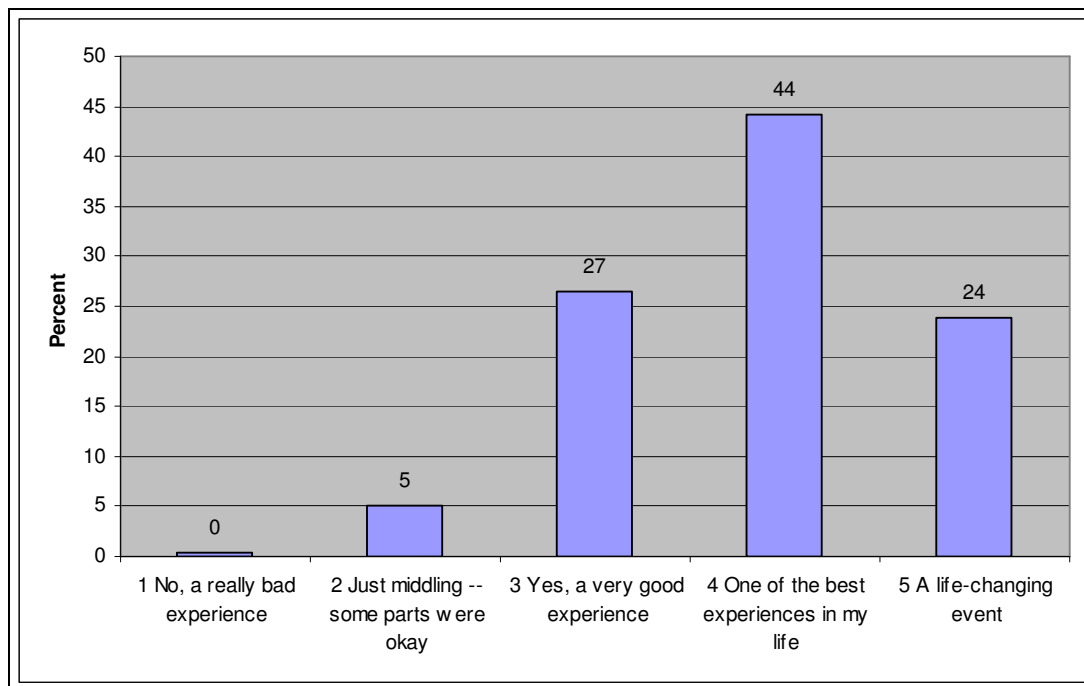
In summary, most pilgrims went to Sydney after undertaking several preparatory activities, and with hopes and expectations that were firmly religious. Many teens were also drawn to the youthful aspects of the event: to the excitement of being part of a huge crowd of young people, making new friends, seeing Sydney. Other aspects of WYD 2008 appealed to all: the prospect of seeing the Pope and feeling part of a large crowd united by shared beliefs.

3. Young people's experience of World Youth Day

Was WYD a good experience?

The first survey question about WYD2008 in Sydney asked simply whether it had been a good experience, and if so, how good.

Figure 3.1 Cyouth: Was WYD a good experience? (%).



How to read this chart: 44% of the Australian Catholics under age 36 who attended WYD08 considered it 'One of the best experiences of my life'.

In an interview after WYD, 17-year-old Charlie said:

I didn't really know what to expect, almost to the point of being hesitant, but I'm so glad I went because it was so beneficial and it was one of the best experiences of my life.

The survey found that 44% responded in similar terms: 'One of the best experiences of my life', while 24% went further, rating WYD as a 'life-changing event'. Twenty-seven percent were content with 'a very good experience'. Very few chose 'really bad' or 'just middling'.

Male and female pilgrims were equally likely to rate the WYD experience highly. Those who had not been active churchgoers prior to WYD were just as likely to respond positively as the highly involved. However, age made a difference: the youngest pilgrims (14-18-year-olds) were more likely than older youth to rate the event as 'life-changing' or 'best'. The survey respondents were restrained in their use of 'life-changing' to describe their experience. They understood it to imply a considerable realignment of their lives, making faith more central.

My testimony: World Youth Day in Sydney 2008 changed my life! I'm aware of all the clichés that provokes, but for me I know if I didn't push myself to be there, I would never

have woken up out of my faith coma. God works in mysterious ways, but I feel for the first time I am home. I have found the Truth (F 18).³

WYD was a life changing experience I thought that the church was daggy and uncool... I now see that my parish is like one big family. I have changed and am no longer scared to show people I'm a Catholic... my friends don't have any belief and still tease me about being Catholic but since WYD I have learnt that it doesn't matter because I am in control of me (F 18).

WYD Was a life changing experience for me, it has made me so spiritually active – much more than before, Everything that I experienced during WYD has made me become who I am today and every event during WYD has made a major impact in my life from the opening Mass to the closing Mass, I even made friends from overseas and I regularly stay in contact with them (M 17).

Older, more highly committed youth were less likely to choose 'life-changing' as a description, as also were those who had attended a previous WYD. No doubt many of the latter would have described their first WYD in those terms.

I think the main reason that this WYD was not a life changing experience was because I attended Cologne in 2005 and that was an experience which changed my life (F 20).

I believe in the WYD experience because my powerful experience was as a pilgrim young person in 1993. This time round (08), I went as a leader and the level of stress involved, I felt took away from me being free to enjoy and participate at the level I did in 1993. Denver changed my life and moved me from a chemistry uni student to a youth worker and now I lecture in youth work at a university and am developing youth ministry at our local level with my husband voluntarily. This survey is a true reflection of my 08 experience but I can vouch for any pilgrim experience like this for others that is why I worked hard at establishing interest in it at our local level. Just for me personally, it was a challenge and God used that to develop me in other parts of my life. WYD 08 can only move someone forward not backward otherwise they would not go! (F 36).

Having one to three of your closest friends sharing the WYD experience with you made hardly any difference to whether you would say the experience was one of the best of your life, or 'life-changing'.

What did people enjoy most about WYD?

From the survey and interviews which took place before WYD, it was known that the large group of teenage pilgrims were anticipating that WYD would be fun, as well as a spiritual experience. For a minority among them, this was the main attraction, but it was significant for most of the younger group.

So in the survey after WYD, there was a question about what was simply most 'most fun / enjoyable' about the whole experience. The question directed people's attention momentarily away from the serious, spiritual aspects of the occasion, and in free-form interviews, many pilgrims resisted this. 'That's trivial' they told us, 'we didn't go to have fun'; or 'the spiritual side of it was also the most enjoyable'. So when it came to the survey, one of the answer options expressed this attitude, and over a third of pilgrims chose it.

'What were the most fun / enjoyable aspects of WYD? Check up to 3 items.' The response options have been rearranged in order by the percentage of respondents who chose each one.

³ The letter and number in brackets after a quote indicate the gender and age of the speaker. So (F 18) indicates that the quotation is from a female pilgrim aged 18. All quotations in this paper are from Australian participants.

Table 3.1 Cyouth: Most enjoyable aspects of WYD (%).

Walking with the big crowd through the city streets	53%
Meeting people	48%
The social aspects were fine, but for me it was the spiritual things that I not only got most out of, but also actually enjoyed most	32%
Just being part of my small group: sleeping, eating, travelling together	27%
Concerts / musical events / entertainment you attended	27%
The late night singing and dancing during the Vigil at Randwick	27%
Hanging out with friends	22%
The concert at Barangaroo on the first evening, after the opening Mass	17%
The 'free hugs'	15%
Sightseeing	5%
Other: the things I enjoyed most were different from any of these	2%

Respondents could choose more than one answer, so percentages add to more than 100.

There were some gender differences in choice of what was most fun. Many more women than men, both younger and older, chose 'walking with the big crowd through the city streets' (57% to 44%). This is consistent with the idea that at WYD young women experienced an exhilarating freedom in feeling safe in the midst of a large but trustworthy crowd. Boys were more likely than girls to select 'hanging out with friends' and 'being part of their small group'.⁴

Things that tended to spoil the WYD experience for some

The researchers had also learned through interviews that, inevitably, not everything about the experience was perfect, and wanted to discover what, if any, were the principal negatives, and how widely they were shared. The items in the fixed-choice list below arose from the team's observations at WYD and from what participants said in interviews or in the survey pre-test. There was also space for people to write in issues not listed, and 16% used this opportunity. *'Please check, in the list below, any aspects of WYD that significantly spoiled the experience for you.'*

Table 3.2 Cyouth: Things that spoiled the WYD experience (%).

There were minor inconveniences, but they didn't spoil the overall experience for me	42%
Too many delays: long queues for food, registration, entry to events	16%
If there was something else that significantly spoiled the experience for you, write it in the box	15%
Not enough free time -- required to stay with group	12%
The commercialism / selling of WYD merchandise was excessive / inappropriate	10%
The bishops' talks at the catecheses were boring, irrelevant to me	10%
The Masses and prayer services did not appeal to young people (e.g. classical music, very formal style)	10%
Too many people in the crowd were not serious	9%
A misfortune -- illness, robbery etc. happened to me or some/all of my group	9%
Not enough time for prayer and reflection	8%
There was too much to do; too busy and exhausting	8%
Registration, travel, luggage delivery or accommodation were badly organised	8%
Accommodation, food or transport were just too far below standard	7%
The crowd-control at events was excessive	6%
Not enough time for real questions at the catecheses	6%
It was old-fashioned Catholicism -- too conservative for me	6%
The games and songs at the catecheses were too juvenile	5%

⁴ These differences, like all differences that are commented on in our reports, are 'statistically significant' at the .05 level or better. See Appendix I for an explanation of statistical significance.

Today's young Australians are accustomed to much higher standards of comfort than previous generations. For school groups, conditions were often rather basic, so it is notable that nearly half of the respondents (42%) regardless of gender or age, brushed aside the opportunity to voice dissatisfaction with anything at WYD, declaring any defects minor compared with what they gained.

Among those who did tick one or other item on the list, there were no significant differences between men and women except that more men objected to the level of 'commercialism'. School-age pilgrims were more likely to find having to stay with their group galling; but then they would have been more constrained in this respect than older attenders. Older youth (25-35) were more dissatisfied with the organisation of registration, travel or accommodation, (they would have had to make their own arrangements) and more likely to have felt the need for more time for prayer and reflection. But they were less critical (5%) of the Bishops' talks at catechesis as boring or irrelevant than the youngest group (aged 14-18: 15%). The complaint that some in the crowd were not serious needs some explanation: it was mentioned in interviews that people's experience of some events was spoiled by others' inappropriate behaviour, such as lack of reverence, non-participation or noisiness, but this concern was expressed only by a minority (9%).

There may have been some who were seriously dissatisfied or angry over some aspect of WYD, and who did not respond to the survey at all – yet others who were dissatisfied clearly did respond, and took advantage of the opportunity to provide quite specific feedback about what had disappointed or annoyed them, or offered constructive suggestions for improvement for future WYDs; so the survey was not limited to those who had only positive attitudes towards all aspects of WYD.

Besides making choices from the checklist of possible negative aspects of the week, respondents were invited to express any other 'gripes' in their own words. These are summarised below. And at the end of the survey there was a question which invited people to write in comments or suggestions on any aspect of the organisation of WYD. Many of these comments were very positive, expressing praise, appreciation and gratitude, but there were some problems noted, and many suggestions were offered for organisers of future WYDs.

Because of their value to past and future WYD organisers, a complete set of all responses received which provided feedback and suggestions on the organisation of WYD, as well as difficulties experienced by pilgrims, was passed on to WYD Administration.

Main themes in the written-in comments and suggestions

Behaviour of other pilgrims

Rude, inconsiderate or disrespectful behaviour on the part of fellow-pilgrims gave rise to a number of complaints.

There was a bunch of people in our section at the Vigil who were up most of the night, being very noisy and rude, talking disrespectfully about women, etc. They tried to leave at one point (around 3 am) and security kept them in. As a result of being kept up by these people, many pilgrims in our section actually slept through the final Mass - the noisy boys left as soon as they could - before Mass even started (F 27).

The lack of reverence during papal Masses and stations spoiled the experience for me (M 27).

Other pilgrims were disappointed by the atmosphere within their own group: hostility or conflict between members, or feelings of exclusion. Clearly, groups should engage in team-building before they set off for WYD, since they are going to be constantly together for a week or more.

Toilets, food

The toilet facilities, especially at Randwick, came in for a deal of criticism. It was said that the toilets became unsanitary, lacked paper, ran out of water.

The toilets were amazingly disastrous. The overflowing toilets and the empty toilet rolls made me feel sorry for the women (M 16).

This WYD was very well organised. As always, toilets at the overnight vigil can be a problem, but even though some broke down, Sydney was the best of any previous similar events I've been to by far (F 32).

The food drew complimentary comments from several people, but there were also many complaints, referring to the quality, quantity, availability and variety of food, and to inadequate catering for those with special dietary needs. There were also complaints about a lack of cutlery and food shortages.

However some pilgrims who had been to previous WYDs thought that the quality and distribution of food at WYD08 were better than they had experienced elsewhere.

Registration issues

There were very many comments on registration issues: not having registration confirmed until the last minute, people not receiving their WYD bags, not knowing where they were billeted, or being sent to the wrong place for their accommodation or for catechesis. Many complaints focussed on the on-line registration website itself, which did not appear equal to the task. WYD group coordinators described entering lengthy details about individuals in a group, only to have the site 'freeze', so that the data they had entered was lost, and had to be entered again, sometimes several times, before registration was successful.

Organisation seemed messy. Information was given late and did not seem to be coordinated very well. Website was messy and hard to navigate. The change in design for the pilgrim registration page was frustrating, and didn't work for us since we had some problem with the payment registering properly. That said, once WYD actually started things ran (surprisingly) smoothly. Transport, events, billeting and so on all seemed to be going really well. It was just in the months before the event that organisation and communication could have been smoother (M 21).

While there were many negative comments about registration, there were also many pilgrims who were impressed with the over-all organisation of WYD08 and compared it favourably to previous WYDs.

With such a monumental event, in terms of size, numbers of pilgrims and cultural and social importance - it was very well organised (F 25).

There were some pilgrims (or intending pilgrims) who were distressed over the way visa applications were handled. Some pilgrims were unable to come to WYD because their visas did not arrive in time or their application was rejected. Some of these had paid their WYD registration and were unable to get a refund.

Would like to see it made a little easier to register in the future. We had Nigerian pilgrims who were meant to come to WYD08 and stay with families from our parish, but

something with their visas prevented them from coming. It was a sad event and it makes you think if something like that might happen to you at future overseas WYDs (M 17).

Travel arrangements

Difficulties were experienced by some of those travelling from interstate, and by some who had difficulty getting to events because of the distance from their accommodation. There were also issues raised about luggage going missing and accommodation mixups.

Travel between locations e.g. the Hordern Pavilion and the city was not well organised and meant many people couldn't make it as it was too hard and it didn't have a food distribution. Some venues were moved and you didn't know till it was too late (F 31).

Travel arrangements weren't so great for the interstate pilgrims - we were in a disused warehouse & everyone got sick. But everything else was fantastic! (F 16).

The travel arrangements were very poor – in particular the bus and luggage issue, it meant that the focus in the start was on the logistics rather than on the festival. Information flow was very poor- we did not know accommodation until one week out. This would put me off taking a group again if this was the level of organisation (F 30).

Others were pleased with the ease with which they could move around. As one 24-year old male put it, 'Public transport was excellent'.

Content of the events

There were some pilgrims who would have like more depth in some events – more opportunity to discuss their faith and develop their spiritual life:

There were not enough spiritual and formation activities and too many 'entertaining' activities, which I believe WYD is not about. I didn't go to WYD to hear people sing songs and dance about, especially if it doesn't teach me anything. I didn't want a concert. I wanted a spiritually engaging experience through prayer, teachings, discussion and learning. There were very few opportunities for this (M 29).

While most pilgrims seemed satisfied with the way Mass was celebrated at the major events, some were disappointed that there was little opportunity for participation by pilgrims: especially that they were not encouraged to join in the singing, and that the words were not up on the screens.

There needs to be booklets with these hymns so people could sing these hymns along with the parish. [Presumably she means before WYD.] This would also get a lot of the parishes or different rites involved in WYD (F 20).

Mass Services were long and boring with no young music (F 17).

The use of Latin at the Masses was not appealing to young people (M 24).

Others said there were not enough youth bands playing and that they were not encouraged to dance and sing in the long lead-up times before major events commenced.

But there is no uniformity of taste in music amongst young people:

The music before and after the vigil was pretty ordinary and too loud. If I wanted to go to a concert I would go to a concert (M 34).

Rock concerts were not necessary and certainly weren't beneficial to the spirituality of the youth. Pope Benedict XVI is also against rock music (M 18).

Were pilgrims teased about going to WYD?

Concluding the inquiry into possible negative experiences associated with WYD, respondents were asked: *'Were you teased / ridiculed / hassled about going to WYD?'*

Table 3.3 Cyouth: Teased or ridiculed about going to WYD (%).

Yes, quite a bit	6%
Only occasionally	34%
Not at all	60%
Total	100%

Sixty percent said they had not been subjected to any teasing or ridicule; most of the rest had experienced it only occasionally. School-age youth were more likely to be teased than those who were older – boys slightly more than girls.

I had somebody who wasn't Catholic say that religion is just for the weak. I was upset when I heard this (F 17).

Quite a few people at work were very interested in what was happening and what was going on. When I got back it was very much, you know, so are you a nun now, are you this, are you that. And I was like oh, come on guys, like fair crack of the sav, but one of the boys at work gave me a lot of strife over it (F 22).

Which aspects of WYD were most spiritually helpful?

The survey proceeded to try to discover why WYD was rated such a good experience by most participants. Interviews conducted after WYD and the pre-test of the survey had revealed that participants did not single out any one or two of the WYD events as fundamental to the value of the occasion for them. They talked most often about the 'atmosphere' at WYD. The younger ones were strongly struck from the first by the friendliness, which they found unusual. Seventeen-year-old 'Bianca' commented:

I didn't think they'd be as open and friendly as they were, you could get a photo with anyone and talk about anything really. People were high fiving down escalators and people from other countries shouting out 'Aussie, Aussie, Aussie, Oi Oi Oi' and everything, it was just such a welcoming atmosphere and one of my friends was saying you could whack your bag and camera on the ground and not be worried someone would steal it.

'Atmosphere'

Even the most casual observers were touched by the infectious joy, friendliness, enthusiasm and sincerity of WYD08 pilgrims. This was what charmed the non-religious bystanders and silenced the critics. But the 'good atmosphere' also had deeper levels: the experience of communing with others who shared the same faith, and at the deepest level, the experience of the presence of God.

Exploring the 'atmosphere' of WYD, pilgrims were asked: *'What did you like most about the atmosphere at WYD? Choose your top 5 from this list and rank them from 1 to 5 with 1 as your top choice.'*

The rank ordering requirement was difficult for participants, but it was important to discover whether some components were more important than others; responses indicating that everything was good or helpful leave the researcher none the wiser.

Table 3.4 Cyouth: What was liked most about atmosphere (% who ranked item first, second or third).

Faith: Being with so many people my age who share the same faith	42%
Church: pride in being Catholic, being part of something greater than ourselves -- worldwide and long-lasting	36%
Community: The special kind of friendliness and openness -- you could talk to anyone; you could trust people	29%
Holy Spirit: The sense that God was present	25%
Goodness: WYD seemed to bring out the best in everyone	23%
Crowd: Being part of a huge crowd of happy young people	22%
Friends: A fun time with friends old and new	17%
Sydney: Beautiful sights and good weather	6%

Respondents could select multiple items, so the percentages who selected each item as their first or second choice obviously add to more than 100.

The order of the items in the table has been rearranged to put those most favoured in the higher rows. The most important elements of the ‘atmosphere’ of WYD for both genders and all age groups were:

- the sense of faith shared with a multitude of young people
- the sense of Church: pride in being Catholic etc.
- the sense of community: friendliness, trust, openness
- the sense of the presence of God / the Holy Spirit

The first item, shared faith, was mentioned more often among people’s top three choices than any other. It was what the majority of pilgrims had said before WYD that they were most hoping for, and their hopes were fulfilled – they found the experience powerful and significant. In interviews, pilgrims made it clear that it was very important to them that this was a big crowd of people *around their age* who were expressing their faith by taking part in WYD. They said that in their experience, it was mostly older people who took faith seriously; youth, even if they were Catholic, were not interested in religion, or inclined to make fun of it. They were also used to keeping their faith discreetly private; only close friends would know if they continued to believe, attend Mass, or take part in other religious groups or activities. In the environment of the school, university or workplace, it was not considered ‘cool’ to be ‘into religion’. As a Year 11 student in a Catholic school put it, ‘Oh, it’s social suicide to speak up in R.E.!’ So for young people who had not floated with the tide and laid aside their childhood faith, it felt liberating to be able to express it openly and with enthusiasm, without worrying what others might think.

Among the school-age group, making new friends, and being part of the big crowd were also often mentioned; but for older youth, all these other components of ‘atmosphere’ were rated far less important than the ‘top four’ listed above. The atmospheric impact of the spectacular site and beautiful weather was minimal compared with the factors just mentioned.

The sense of the presence of God as a powerful aspect of the WYD experience had recurred constantly, in interviews conducted after WYD but before the survey took place, so the next question explored this further.

Experiences of the presence of God

The question invited participants to select from a list of responses or to write their own story about occasions at WYD when they had been ‘strongly aware of the presence of God’.

'Was there a moment (or more than one) during the week when you were strongly aware of the presence of God? When was that? You can choose up to 5 of the following, or check 4 of these and write your own in the space provided.'

Table 3.5 Cyouth: Occasions when experienced presence of God (%).

The Vigil at Randwick	51%
The Closing Mass	41%
The Stations of the Cross	40%
The Opening Mass	32%
The Pope's arrival at Barangaroo	30%
Pilgrim walk to Randwick	30%
Morning Catechesees	25%
Going to Reconciliation (Confession) during WYD	20%
No, I didn't have this experience	7%

How to read this table: 51% of respondents selected 'The Vigil at Randwick' as one of the occasions when they were strongly aware of the presence of God. This was the occasion most frequently selected. Items have been rearranged in order of how frequently they were selected.

How did people experience the presence of God on these different occasions? Several were long and complex events, with many quite different parts. There was broad agreement across age and gender groups that the Vigil at Randwick, the only major event to take place at night, was the most significant occasion. For women of all ages, the Stations of the Cross ranked next, while men, especially the youngest group, ranked the Stations significantly lower. More light is shed on these choices by the questions that immediately followed, but also by the write-in responses on this same question.

At the Stations of the Cross, it was incredible, the look on the faces of people around me and really feeling the pain that Mary went through! So powerful. Being in the presence of so many dedicated young people made me a lot more aware of the presence of God and the Holy Spirit working in each one of us (F 20).

Because it was recognised that this question raised an issue at the heart of the WYD experience, and also one on which tick-box answers were not adequate to encompass the range of people's experiences, unlimited space was provided for people to write-in in their own words, accounts of their experiences of the presence of God. Over 1500 respondents did so, creating a rich resource for understanding their spirituality.

Pilgrims described their experiences and what occasioned them with great clarity. The circumstances varied widely: at one of the big events, sharing faith with others, walking in the street, at Mass or in private prayer, or while helping someone, or praying with a group:

Apart from going to reconciliation, which was very powerful for me, praying in the morning with the South Africans (who were staying at the same place), was extremely powerful. The combination of music and quiet time made me feel like God was really present at that time (F 16).

Some pilgrims felt especially close to God during the concerts and at adoration, especially while they were listening to or taking part in the music:

At the WYD concert in Barangaroo after the Stations of the Cross, where I was with two of my closest friends and people from New Zealand we just met, I found myself amazingly calm and relaxed and felt the presence of God (F 16).

When Guy Sebastian sang, 'Falling in love with Jesus', knowing that it was the best thing I'd ever done brought tears; and then walking past the night clubs after the 'Receive the

Power Live' concert at Barangaroo and thinking how the experience of God and WYD was so much more satisfying than night clubs, and the other life is empty (F 23).

Pilgrims said that they felt the presence of God at organised events like the Hour of Prayer, the pilgrim walk, the catecheses, the Vigil, the Masses and Days in the Diocese.

At the vigil night at Randwick the sight of so many hundreds of thousands of candles surrounding me was magical since I realised that each candle, each pinprick of light surrounded by darkness was representative of another being who believed - another being who believed in the power and awesome beauty of God. It was at this moment that I fully realised we are truly never alone, we are truly part of God's church - part of a worldwide community which is God's presence here on earth (F 18).

Seeing the Pope was an intensely spiritual moment for some pilgrims; one pilgrim wrote 'those few seconds with our Holy Father will last me a lifetime'. Another said:

I felt the presence of God when the Pope arrived in his Popemobile and some of my guy friends my age who are normally all tough and never express their faith started smiling and screaming out 'Papa Benny!', 'Papa Benny!', and I looked around and so was everybody else, we were together, at that feeling we were God, we really were his sons and daughters, I now know we really are, and that was the moment I will never forget in my whole life. Thank you (F 19).

My experience with the Lord being present and I was hit with the Holy Spirit was when the Pope joined us at Randwick. When his car was driving around the fields and the theme song was playing I felt a hit, a change in what I felt throughout the whole week! It was a feeling that is just unexplainable but I must say a feeling that was definitely life-changing!!! (F 19).

People also spoke of sensing the presence of God in less public settings, such as while observing nature:

I felt the presence of God strongly during Taizé prayer and during the pilgrim walk. I find God in the presence of others and in quiet reflection and in the beauty of nature. The colours of the crowds, the enthusiasm and reverence that everyone showed helped me to see God. The kindness, helpfulness and generosity of spirit within the pilgrims was amazing (F 26).

The major events at Barangaroo and Randwick

Participants were next asked a separate question about each major event, asking them how helpful that event was for their spiritual development. They were asked to use the categories:

- The most helpful event for my spiritual development
- Very helpful
- Fairly helpful
- Not so helpful
- I wasn't at this event

Table 3.6 summarises these ratings, reporting the order in which the events fall when weighted by the percentage who nominated each one as either 'the most helpful' or 'very helpful'.

Table 3.6 Cyouth: Helpfulness of the 5 major events (% of those who attended the event and who ranked it the most helpful or very helpful).

The Vigil night at Randwick	75%
The Closing Mass	66%
The Stations of the Cross	66%
The Opening Mass	58%
The Pope's arrival at Barangaroo	54%

When asked to choose among the five large-group events at Barangaroo and Randwick, the young people rated the Vigil, the Closing Mass and the Stations of the Cross as the most spiritually helpful events. Not surprisingly, the order is the same as in the responses to the previous question on occasions when they most experienced the presence of God.

The opening Mass also had an impact, as recalled by one participant:

At the opening Mass when I received the Eucharist I felt joy and happiness I have never felt before. It was truly heavenly. I started crying because I was so happy, I couldn't stop smiling because I could really feel the Holy Spirit in me. I would do anything to capture that happiness once more (F 22).

Significant aspects of the Vigil, the Closing Mass, the Stations

Those who ranked an event the most helpful were asked a follow-up question about that event. Here is what people said about the Vigil, when asked: 'What was it about the Vigil that was helpful? Check only the things that were most important for you.' Respondents could check more than one item, so the percentages in the following tables add to more than 100%. The items have been rearranged to place those selected by more respondents in the higher rows.

Table 3.7 Cyouth who had ranked Vigil the most helpful: Most helpful aspects of the Vigil (%).

The sense that God was present	71%
The solidarity: being there with all the pilgrims camping out for the night	62%
The total silence at several points	62%
Seeing the Pope, listening to him	57%
The beauty of the candles flickering, the night, the lights on the altar	56%
The message of the Pope's homily	47%
The Eucharistic Adoration	45%
The prayers	40%
The performances of music and dance and the atmosphere they created	34%
The testimonies from pilgrims	17%
The witness of the ten WYD patron saints	15%

How to read this table: of those who had chosen the Vigil as the most helpful event (see Table 2.6), 62% selected 'The total silence at several points' as one of the most helpful aspects of the Vigil.

Differences between men and women regarding which aspects of the Vigil made the strongest impression on them, followed what now seems the usual pattern: they were not large to begin with, and when men and women of the same age were compared, the apparent differences disappeared, since they had been due to the higher proportion women than of men in the 14-18 age bracket. Because the youngest group of pilgrims (14-18) was so large (almost 50% of the Australian contingent), it is their views that tend to be reflected in the results for the whole group. Pilgrims in the 25-35 age-group derived more inspiration from

the Eucharistic Adoration (61%) and somewhat less from the beauty of the candle-lit scene (43%).

There were several comments on the importance of the silences:

Amazing, I loved the vigil and the Mass in the morning, that's where it all comes together for me so I loved it. I loved the vigil, the vigil was done a lot better than it was in Germany and I really appreciated that. As soon as the Pope got up there, everyone had their candles and everyone was standing up and it was beautiful and it was dead silent, I mean to get four hundred thousand people silent is unbelievable (F 20).

At the Vigil on the Saturday night when the Pope called for silence and it just amazed me that you could have 400,000 people there and everyone was quiet, we were all in that religious mode and we were all silent and that really was quite moving (F 17).

It's hard to narrow it down to just one particular experience however I think it would have been the night of the Vigil at Randwick Racecourse when the Pope was speaking. There's been a couple of things that have stayed in my mind since then and the experience of the solemnity of the group and the young people and when they erupted into singing, that would move me (F 23).

Notice also the relatively high ranking given in the table to 'the beauty of the candles ...'. In all other evaluations of the major events, the pilgrims ranked what we might call 'the scene' at the bottom of the list – seemingly little moved by mere appearances. But the younger pilgrims especially seem to recall the Vigil 'scene' as having had a greater impact, when they try to say what it was about the Vigil that made it a high point for them.

The Closing Mass: 'What was it about the Closing Mass that was helpful?'

Table 3.8 Youth who had ranked Closing Mass the most helpful: Most helpful aspects of the Closing Mass (%).

The sense that God was present	72%
Seeing the Pope, listening to him, being at his Mass	72%
The message of the Pope's homily	60%
The solidarity among all the pilgrims who has been at WYD together	61%
The way the Mass was celebrated	47%
The music (orchestra and choir) and the atmosphere it created	38%
The beautiful weather, the huge crowd, the flags of so many nations	37%
The liturgy of the Word (scripture readings, prayers)	32%

It was at the closing Mass that Pope Benedict made his most sustained and memorable appearance: he was driven through the crowd so that most were able to see him at no great distance; he was the principal celebrant at the Mass and delivered a lengthy and powerful homily, departing spectacularly by helicopter as the ceremony ended. Pilgrims' recollections of this event placed the encounter with the Holy Father as the most beneficial aspect of the experience. Older pilgrims rated somewhat more highly the message of his homily, a dense and learned exposition that was very demanding for younger listeners.

Many pilgrims said that they had not expected seeing the Pope to make much of an impression on them, but were then surprised at its impact. Perhaps what made the difference was that he did not merely appear and receive plaudits, like a celebrity – which may have been many young Australians' previous image of him. Instead, they saw him in action in his role as head of the Church: he greeted his flock as a kindly elder and blessed them, he led them in prayer and solemn worship; he spoke as an authoritative teacher of faith and urged

his people to follow the Gospel path in their lives. It may have been for many the first time they had grasped that this is who the Pope is.

Comments on this event included the following:

Pope Benedict's homily in the Closing Mass touched me with the question he asked us: 'What will be our legacy to this world, what can you do to make a difference?' The entire homily struck a chord within me (F 26).

The highlight of the closing Mass however was the Pope's words before we prayed the angelus — they touched me to the core. I keep a printed copy in my weekly diary and read it often (F 20).

The Stations: 'What was it about the Stations of the Cross that was helpful?'

Table 3.9 Youth who had ranked Stations the most helpful: Most helpful aspects of the Stations (%).

Seeing how much Jesus suffered for humanity	72%
The dramatic presentation of the Passion	65%
The sense that God was present	59%
The stillness and respect among the crowd	55%
The music and the atmosphere it created	37%
The beauty of the setting: the sites around Sydney, the water, the weather	21%

The Stations of the Cross made a powerful impact, with very high agreement between men and women and pilgrims of different ages on the aspects of the event, listed in the above table, which were most important for them. Many commented that they were deeply moved by the enactment:

The Stations of the Cross was incredible, our group went and sat down in Circular Quay and watched Stations of the Cross and every single person who was there watching it was moved and had the same reaction I did, that was really incredible (M 17).

I always get an anointing of the Holy Spirit with the Stations of the Cross at Easter, however at the Stations of the Cross at WYD08 I really felt the presence of God – thousands of young people all quiet and reverent while listening to the most significant journey of Jesus Christ and the suffering he had to endure to prove his love gave me goose-bumps. I cried and prayed the Lord's prayer. It was so beautifully portrayed (F 32).

Impact of other major WYD activities

Apart from the five major large-group celebrations, there were a host of other activities, especially the catechesis sessions which took place in the mornings. The next set of questions asked which of these 'secondary' events people found the most helpful. Out of hundreds of smaller events, we chose to list those which had been frequently mentioned in interviews or the survey pre-test.

'How helpful for your spiritual development were the other events listed below?'

Table 3.10 Cyouth: Most helpful events other than the 5 major celebrations (%).

Event	% rating event 'the most helpful or very helpful'
Pilgrim walk to Randwick	52%
Visit to the Cross and Icon	51%
The morning catecheses	49%
'Receive the Power Live' concert	44%
Visit to a church where there was adoration	38%
Going to Reconciliation (Confession) during WYD	37%
The Days in the Diocese in another diocese before going to Sydney	32%
Visit to shrine of Mary MacKillop or Pier Giorgio Frassati	30%
The Vocations Expo	22%

The pilgrim walk and the concert were more often mentioned by the younger pilgrims; and the catecheses, adoration and Reconciliation by the two older groups.

Since the morning catecheses were considered so helpful, further questions were asked of those who rated them highly, to discover what aspects of them were most appealing.

The catecheses: what was helpful and what was not

Experiences at previous WYDs that were related to us indicate that the catecheses played a more prominent role in WYD08 in Sydney than at previous events. It was frequently commented, by older pilgrims who had attended previous WYDs, that distance and difficulties with public transport hindered many from getting to the venues for their scheduled catecheses during the WYD celebrations in Cologne, Toronto and Rome. The number of participants in Sydney was much smaller, and public transport was well arranged, and able to cope with the crowd. These factors, and the intensive preparation of the series of catecheses, involving the complex allocation of participants in language groups to venues, the involvement of the 'animating teams' and the provision of onsite meals, enabled the catecheses to play a more significant role in the WYD experience than ever before.

There was a variety of responses from pilgrims to the catecheses: some of the presenters were described as very good; others as not quite hitting the mark. Pilgrims appreciated being able to ask questions and many said that their faith was strengthened as a result of attending. Others were less enthusiastic and complained that the interaction between different groups was restricted and that there were not enough opportunities for discussion. Some pilgrims praised the animators at their catechesis as highly skilled and professional at getting the pilgrims involved, other animators were judged not so skilled. Some older pilgrims found the warm-up sessions too juvenile.

A seventeen-year-old boy wrote: 'The catecheses were probably the most influential part of the whole WYD for me'.

At catechesis, I felt God really calling me to surrender myself to him and a freedom lifted from me.[?] This has truly sustained me through difficulties in the last 6 months (M 19).

The team's observations of the catecheses, informal conversations with participants immediately afterwards, and discussions in interviews, indicated that for many, these morning gatherings were a highlight of the week.

I missed the first catechesis Mass because I thought it would be boring, but after talking to the groups who attended, I became interested and attended and attended and was rapt. I was so impressed by the bishops' talks, I loved them. I strongly believe that the Church needs to send these Bishops or Priests who can talk like this to our Catholic schools. Bring the young back to the Faith (M 58).

It was very heartening to discover just how much young people are hungering for the truth and open to that truth when they are given straight answers. WYD is one of the rare opportunities where young people can ask all the big questions and have half a chance of actually hearing the Church's answer. The catechesis is an essential component of WYD, however in my own experience this is extremely hit and miss - not that there is much one can do about this. We can however do more to prepare Youth leaders, particularly in regards to catechesis in the months (preferably 12 months) leading up to WYD so that they are comfortable and confident in their own knowledge of the faith, and thus able to pass this on to the pilgrims. Young people are not stupid, and they can pick a mile off those who have Christ as the centre of their faith, and those who have the many other substitutes (M 27).

Those who said the morning catecheses were 'the most helpful' of these other events (15%), or were 'very helpful' (30%), were asked what made the catecheses positive experiences for them.

'What most helped the catecheses to be a positive experience for you? Choose just one feature, or up to a maximum of 3.'

Table 3.11 Youth who rated catechesis most or very helpful: Reasons why catecheses were helpful (%).

It was about our lives, and how the Holy Spirit works through us	53%
The bishops talked to us, not at us / did not talk down to us	43%
It showed the church was really concerned for youth, and was reaching out to us	36%
People could ask questions and the bishop at least tried to answer	36%
It was designed for young people and had a light style, not heavy religion	32%
The Mass at catechesis was well designed for youth	25%
The 'animating team' really helped the session	22%

All age-groups concurred on the aspect ranked first: the relevance of the content of the catecheses to their lives. The youngest rated as next important the youth-oriented light touch of the sessions. The oldest group were the most impressed by the bishops' uncondescending style, and glad of the opportunity to ask questions. Equal proportions of all groups agreed that the sessions projected the church's genuine concern for youth, and valued the contributions of the animating teams.

For this participant, one of the catecheses raised a question which she afterwards took up with one of the priests present:

It just makes you look at God in a different way. I mean we're always told that God's our know, your friend and that He's loving and caring. But after World Youth Day and after the priest had that conversation with us about God always being there with us in our suffering and that God gives us sufferings to bring Himself closer to us, it's really changed my relationship with God. I feel like God's a close friend rather than just someone I just pray to for the sake of praying. It's someone you can tell your feelings to, have a conversation with, get help from. That's what God is to me now. It's definitely changed my perspective of God (F 17).

Those who said the morning catecheses were ‘not so helpful’, were asked ‘What contributed most to making the catecheses a negative experience for you? Choose just one feature, or up to a maximum of 3.’

Table 3.12 Youth who rated catechesis ‘not so helpful’: Reasons why catecheses were considered not helpful (%).

The bishop's talk was hard to understand / not practical / too intellectual	53%
The songs and activities etc. were too childish	38%
The bishop spoke about teachings (e.g. on sexuality) that I don't agree with	33%
The bishop said things (e.g. about Jesus or the Holy Spirit) that I don't believe	23%
The bishop's talk was too critical of youth / negative in tone	22%

Only a small proportion (10%) of pilgrims had rated the catecheses ‘not so helpful’. Within this segment, the youngest were twice as likely as the oldest group to have found the talks hard to understand, and the oldest more likely not to have felt comfortable with songs or activities.

Some pilgrims who were past school age commented in interviews that the catecheses were too simplistic: not challenging or spiritual enough.

I felt WYD was far too juvenile in some areas (a feeling I also had when I went with a group to Rome in 2000). While the large public ceremonies were beautiful and directed one's mind to heaven, the Masses at the catechesis sites were starkly different. They seemed part of the 'Old Guard' of the 1960s and '70s. So while I found the catechesis Masses and the more 'colloquial' liturgies to be juvenile, the exact opposite was experienced in the large public gatherings (M 25).

Catechesis: This is a bone of contention following every WYD to the point that this time I forewarned my group not to expect too much. And I'm glad we did warn them as it was a disappointing experience. Animation was the same every day and provided by the same people every day, the same music, the same voices. The 1st Bishop was monotone, boring, irrelevant and political - politics isolates people. Thankfully, the 2nd bishop was very good. Relaxed and challenging and open to discussion. I'd like to know, how Bishops are selected for catechesis Is it just that they volunteer? Or does someone somewhere take an interest in their ability to give catechesis? Talk to young people? Be open and frank? The group I took are from a charismatic background and the most frustrating things for most of us were: 1) the bishops shied away from answering difficult or controversial questions (what they were being asked was completely in line with Church teaching); 2) Some are dismissive of the charismatic renewal - this isolates; 3) the bishop is not interested in their topic. I'd like to suggest that somehow bishops are vetted! Could there be some kind of registry of what bishop is doing catechesis and where? Can you let group leaders know what bishops are doing catechesis at their catechesis site prior to arriving for WYD - this would then allow them to make informed decisions for their group (F 29).

The indigenous catechesis could have been so much better, it was long, and not interactive and far too conservative for the school age students who attended (F 32).

The music etc at catechesis was unsuitable (too loud, irreverent, not God-focussed enough) and the first bishop we had for catechesis was not an engaging speaker and also did not have strong conviction in the church's teaching on some issues (F 22).

Comparing all aspects of WYD taken together

Much later in the survey, close to the end, participants were asked again to compare aspects of WYD and indicate what they had found most helpful; but this time they were able to compare the ‘major’ events with quite small scale happenings, and with the less tangible, ‘atmosphere’ aspects of WYD.

The question was: *‘Going back for a moment to the many different happenings at WYD, which one(s) most helped you in your spiritual journey? Choose up to 3 of the most helpful things.’*

Again, the items are rearranged in order to show those most often chosen at the top.

Table 3.13 Cyouth: which activity helped you most in your spiritual journey (% of respondents who checked each item among their 3 choices).

1. Faith: Being with so many people my age who share the same faith	37%
2. Church: pride in being Catholic, part of something greater than ourselves -- worldwide and long-lasting	32%
3. Holy Spirit: The sense that God was present	28%
4. Seeing the Pope, listening to him, celebrating Mass with him	27%
5. Community: The special kind of friendliness and openness -- you could talk to anyone; you could trust people	27%
6. The Vigil night at Randwick	21%
7. Crowd: Being part of a huge crowd of happy young people	21%
8. The Stations of the Cross	18%
9. Goodness: WYD seemed to bring out the best in everyone	19%
10. Morning Catecheses	14%
11. Going to Reconciliation (Confession) during WYD	11%
12. The ‘Days in the Diocese’ in another diocese before going to Sydney	7%
13. The Closing Mass	8%
14. The Pope’s arrival at Barangaroo	8%
15. The Opening Mass	6%
16. None of these things	1%

At first sight, the question appears redundant – surely respondents have already said what they found most helpful among all these events and activities? True, but in earlier questions, for obvious reasons, they have been making comparisons within sets of similar things: ‘atmosphere’ items, major events and minor events – just as in a talent quest, there might be a first round of voting in which singers were compared with other singers, and instrumentalists with each other. But having settled their judgment of which WYD activity was most helpful within each category, those who responded to the survey now needed the opportunity to compare items belonging to different groups, (like voting for an overall winner in the talent quest) and this question, with its long list of items of all kinds, provided that opportunity.

The results are quite striking. Several ‘atmosphere’ items were most often chosen as the aspects of WYD that most helped participants on their spiritual journey. ‘Faith’, ‘Church’, ‘the presence of God’ and ‘Community’ (items 1, 2, 3 & 5) are just different aspects of the experience of an ‘ecclesial community’, united around its earthly head, the Pope (item 4).

It is very significant that in the pre-WYD survey, it was this experience above all that the pilgrims hoped for and anticipated, and when their hope was realised, (often, it seems, more intensely than they had thought possible), they considered, looking back, that it had been the most important and helpful dimension of their WYD experience.

The 'community' and 'crowd' aspects of the event made a less powerful impression on those over 25 – only half as many of them, compared with the 14-18s, placed these items among their top three choices. For them 'Church', 'Holy Spirit', 'Pope' and 'Faith' were more often chosen.

Pilgrims commented again and again how much they appreciated being with other young Catholics – how belonging to a worldwide community of fellow believers gave them a stronger sense of their Catholic identity. There was a sense of pride in being Catholic and a strengthened commitment to Catholicism.

The most rewarding experience was definitely seeing so many young people who share 'my' faith. However, it also highlights that though some of these were Catholics, they really did not give a darn about what being a Catholic actually is. ... For me, WYD was simply a reaffirmation of how much Catholicism has to do to attempt to project a sign of relevance to the youth of today. It was also, however, a reaffirmation of the potential of our faith in drawing so many people from different races together (F 22).

I feel it has definitely changed my life in a way that has made me realise that our faith is really something special and is very important (F 16).

Seeing the Pope and being part of a historic week stood out, afterwards, in people's memories of WYD. For most pilgrims, going to a new city and meeting people from other places was itself a very positive experience –increasing their sense of community and broadening their view of the world at the same time as strengthening their faith.

WYD was very spiritual for me in all its forms. I really felt Christ's presence at moments like just being with my friends that night, meeting new people with the same faith from other countries, witnessing Pope Benedict up there on that stage, singing along, and through all the other instances, big and small. WYD was truly a wonderful experience. I would not have gone deeper into my faith in this way if I hadn't gone to WYD08 (F 17).

WYD was the best thing I have ever attended. I made so many new friends, and seeing the Pope was an overwhelming experience. Although I haven't learnt much about my faith in general, I believe that WYD was created by God to bring us all together to celebrate, have fun and rejoice in our faith. I loved it (F 18).

Although the 'Days in the diocese' activities in the week prior to WYD were mainly for the benefit of the overseas visitors, many Australian pilgrims took part in them, often in helping roles, and enjoyed the activities and the opportunities they provided for meeting the pilgrims from overseas.

If there was more that people wanted to say about their WYD experience, they were able to enter it in their own words, and many took advantage of this opportunity. A few of their comments have been incorporated above with those from interviews.

For many WYD was a life-changing experience and one in which their faith was strengthened, and as a result they plan to become more involved in their own spiritual life and in the church.

It was an awesome week and my experiences, especially of the Stations of the Cross and the Vocations Expo have encouraged me to hold nothing back from Christ, to give my life to him and bear witness to others with courage (F 18).

Feedback about WYD and suggestions for the future

Feedback

At the end of the survey questionnaire, respondents were invited to comment on the organisational aspects of WYD and suggestions for future WYDs. They were told that their feedback and suggestions for the future would be passed on to the responsible authorities.

‘Write here any feedback you would like to give about the organisation of World Youth Day 2008 -- e.g. the program of events, the registration process, communication of information, travel arrangements, food and accommodation, facilities etc. Your comments will be passed on to the appropriate departments. This is also the place to offer any suggestions you would like to make on these topics for WYD in Madrid in 2011.’

Many hundreds of comments and suggestions were received. Some of the feedback was summarised or quoted in the earlier section on difficulties experienced by pilgrims. The complete text of these comments and suggestions has been passed on to WYD Administration, and will also be made available to organisers of future WYDs.

What follow-up to WYD would be most helpful?

Almost at the end of the survey, pilgrims were asked: *‘Follow-up to WYD: what would help you to continue growing spiritually? Check the ones that would help you most.’* Again, people could check more than one item, and the order of items has been rearranged.

Table 3.14 Cyouth: what kind of follow-up to WYD would help you most (%).

1. Retreats / camps for people who want to grow in faith	52%
2. More youth-oriented Masses in parishes and dioceses	50%
3. Regular get-togethers with other WYD pilgrims	47%
4. An annual national gathering of young Catholics	47%
5. Hearing good presentations of Catholic faith	40%
6. Opportunities to use my gifts in the Church	31%
7. Forums in which young people can discuss their faith	30%
8. Access to an advisor to talk about my spiritual life	23%
9. Opportunities for dialogue with church leaders	22%
10. An on-line instructional resource for learning more about the Catholic faith	22%
11. I'm not really into spiritual growth just now	6%

Well ahead of other options was the idea of ‘retreats or camps for people who want to grow in faith’ – this can be implemented in schools, parishes and dioceses; it requires good programs and well-prepared leaders, but is less complex to implement than national gatherings.

The top three choices owe their pre-eminence especially to the added boost they received from girls in the youngest age group, who favoured them significantly more strongly than boys of the same age.

There is no significant difference in popularity between options 2-4; they could be considered equal second choices. The first four options are all means of keeping alive and strengthening the experience of faith-community which was rated the most valuable aspect of WYD.

Interestingly, 'Opportunities to use my gifts' was not a high priority for women of any age; more men chose it than women in all three age-groups.

Respondents were also given the opportunity to write-in their own suggestions for following-up WYD: *'If there are other things that you would find helpful, please describe them here'*.

Many wrote quite lengthy replies, with very varied suggestions which will be analysed in more detail in later reports. Here we present a selection of suggestions grouped into topics.

Youth Groups / Christian community

Building a network for the youth in our regions & states; i.e. we are just establishing a more formalised youth group in our parish and we have noticed that other parishes in Western Australia are doing the same. We are trying to keep communication channels open between our groups and learn from each (M 25).

Resources for developing youth groups, ideas for youth groups, more support from the Archdiocese, clarity with the Catholic church on evangelisation, more social activities to help attract the youth back into the church (F 17).

Proper, intimate Catholic community. We should just admit what most parishes are, i.e. Mass centres, and start to form our communities of lay people, with priests and religious welcome (especially in their pastoral and teaching roles). The episcopal permission to do this, a requisite move away from clericalism, and the acceptance of different ways of doing Church other than the parish would be helpful (M 27).

People to come out and help set up Youth Group in our parish (F 32).

Youth group type opportunities for Catholic young people who are now 'too old' for Antioch, YCW etc i.e. 25 - 40 year olds (F 33).

Follow-up Events

Something big in each state every year, like a big pilgrim Mass (F 17).

A World Youth Day Festival held over a weekend (like 'The Big Day Out' only better). This would be a yearly event; especially in the lead up and Madrid 2011 but also to keep the Spirit of World Youth Day growing stronger (M 39).

Sustain Youth initiatives like creation of Choir, and sport activities - Facilitate and organize youth concert of Christian songs - Organize Youth Christian Music competition in different dioceses - Involve parents to talk about these issues most of the time to their children (M 36).

Just regular get-togethers. I know many of my friends that would like that because ever since WYD has finished I just feel like this big thing is missing and to just have some usual get-togethers I'm sure it will help to grow stronger with my faith (F 17).

If we could also focus on younger youth that went to WYD get-togethers and discussions and forums. It all seems to be focused at 18 year olds. I'm 14 and it has impacted me greatly and I'm not naive in my faith, it's important to me (F 14).

'Receive the Power Live' was spectacular and very enriching; we should do it annually. Youth are looking for big events (F 35).

Camps

Camps would be great to catch up and see and or/ meet people from WYD as they shared the same experience (F 18).

Ways in which Catholics and non-Christians could experience Christianity as a whole, rather than just Catholicism, perhaps through means of camps (M 17).

Regular reflection days for WYD pilgrims from the same diocese (F 17).

Mentoring

There was a youth chaplain I met on WYD – I find her really inspirational. I would like her to help me or someone like her anyway (F 16).

Youth Masses

More opportunities to praise and worship God how/where the Holy Spirit leads, as often the celebration of the Mass is too conservative and not quite the joyous celebration I believe it could be! (F 35).

Would really enjoy going to Mass with young people in a youth environment, it would make Mass a more enjoyable celebration of faith (F 17).

Young people to be supported at all Parish Churches particularly if they wish to start a new ministry or even just focus on youth Masses weekly instead of monthly (F 41).

What would help me to grow spiritually is to have a strong parish community - when I say strong, I mean a traditional parish where the priest is not afraid of confronting the moral and spiritual issues which trouble our times. The problem with Catholicism - and what I believe is turning youth away - is the 'youth oriented' Masses, the 'sing-alongs' that my local parish has for the primary school children. Mass is not a High Five concert. That may keep the kids interested while they have to be at Mass.(F 22).

Maybe not just youth Masses but encouraging people of all ages to get involved in the Church. After all it is one-family. 'Youth Masses' should never be exclusive to youth whilst Mass should not be an old person's club. It should be a case of people from all backgrounds should be able to feel comfortable interacting with each other. On rosters a mix of people should be involved on roster. This style works well in our parish where I always feel welcome in an 'ordinary' Sunday Mass (M 19).

I get the feeling that 'youth' are alienated in the Church. Not badly, but more to the point of 'here is the youth, and here is the rest of the Church'. I personally would appreciate, instead of 'youth Masses' (or in conjunction with them) having newer songs in each weekend Mass, or having Gospel dramatisations or something like that (M 18).

Teaching

I would find it more helpful if I felt that the institutional Church was generally more open to dialogue. At the moment I sometimes don't feel comfortable discussing my views because they are sometimes different to the official position of the church (F 26).

More Bible-teaching that actually looks at how to read and understand the scriptures for ourselves and apply them. Addressing key faith/anti-faith issues like the differences between Catholics and other faiths, talking with atheists ... More teaching about the different aspects of what we believe generally – why the Trinity; what happens at Communion; what's the place of the Old Testament ... A lot of these issues I think are left up to Sunday School and Scripture class to teach (M 21).

I found the RE at my school to be heavy-handed and have heard that RE at other schools is close to laughable. More needs to be done to give young Catholics a better grasp of their faith. However, it needs to be done in an open, accepting manner, reminiscent of the atmosphere at WYD. Ideally it should be given by someone who is very knowledgeable about the faith and open to discussion, like the bishops at the morning catechesis (M 21).

Approachable non judgemental follow up to grow as a committed Christian and to provide to youth a welcoming atmosphere when they attend Mass in their local parishes, I believe all Parish Priests should be encouraged to motivate and encourage the youth to implement what they got from World Youth Day in their parishes to continue to grow in Christ (F 37)

I would like to learn about the Catholic faith more extensively. Although I would be interested to learn it more as a university course, some of the courses/sessions I have been to are a bit dumbed down I think (F 21).

Space for personal reflection/meditation ... tips on how to grow spiritually, more like a one-on-one with God ... Bible study or group catechesis like that of WYD; experience mini-WYD locally; re-living the youthful spirit (F 18).

Some resources or people to help me explain difficult aspects of Catholicism to my friends – they expect me to have all the answers, and if I don't have them they won't ever hear them (F 16).

Regular youth conferences like that held in Collaroy Beach with speakers and faith issues and forums for youth. Would like to see a youth conference/catechesis 3 times a year or more. Once a year would not be enough to keep motivated to live the faith. Youth need ongoing and authentic catechesis and it is not coming from our parishes! (F 48).

We really need enthusiastic preachers who can speak in common terms, and teach messages in real-life words and stories, with language common people can understand (M 21).

We need to introduce catechesis in parishes to revive the drooping faith of young Catholics and not-so-young Catholics. The Truth must be preached to us - nothing more, nothing less. No more wishy-washy, lovey-dovey stuff (F 47).

We Catholics need to know more about our faith but the way it is explained needs to be contemporary, useful, practical. We need to know about the relationship between being straight and having/ living by faith We need to get in the media (F 31)!

Communication

I wish there were more Catholic media stuff like the Christians have - more Catholic films to access, more Catholic music festival, more Catholic theatre of high quality (F 28).

Information in an accessible and easy to understand way about the Catholic faith and how it'll apply in a youth's daily life. In formats such as booklets for example (F 16).

Greater (positive) representation of the church in mainstream media - and somewhat less exposure for the upper hierarchy - they make the church look like bunch of idiots blindly following a few old men in dresses with all the power (M 19).

Online detailed resources explaining why the churches views on many issues are the way they are. Married / female priests, homosexuality, transgender are just a few of many issues I'd like to explore, without the usual cop outs – 'tradition', 'the bible says so', 'be happy with the way God made you' (M 31).

Youth Ministry Training

As an employed Youth Ministry Co-ordinator, I find that gatherings of the wider network of key leaders in youth ministry essential to my sense of connection within the Catholic Youth Ministry Community, and thus to God. When there is opportunity for focused prayer, reflection and spiritual direction on the role of a 'top level' leader (and not

addressed to me as if I were a young person, or a youth minister who has daily contact and responsibility for a single group of teenagers) (F 37).

Affordable music workshops where we can increase our training in the music ministry; music resources where we can share and tap into for the use in church/group; talks/forum which allows critical thinking and discussion made available freely or affordably for students (F 30).

National Youth Website with training or formation opportunities for youth leaders and programs to be used for events/youth groups (F 28).

Do 2008 attenders plan to go to the next WYD in Madrid in 2011?

'About going to the next WYD -- Madrid2011'

Table 3.15 Cyouth: plan to go to Madrid (%).

I won't be going	7%
Would like to go; thinking about it; but nothing definite yet	22%
Really want to go but not sure I'll be able to make it	18%
Very keen to go and hopeful that I can get it together	39%
Definitely going -- I'm certain I can make it	14%
Total	100%

Finding the time and the funds to travel halfway round the world for the next WYD was a challenging prospect, and drew cautiously realistic responses. Remember, the question was not asked at the climax of WYD enthusiasm, but four months later, after the intensity of the experience had had time to cool. 'Very keen, and hopeful' was still the commonest choice for both men and women – mainly those under 25; the 25-35s were more likely to choose the more cautious 'nothing definite' or 'not sure'. Only about one in seven was really confident of going – mostly from the younger two groups.

Regardless of their own intentions and prospects, would respondents recommend attending the Madrid WYD to others? The response to this question serves as yet another indicator of how positively pilgrims rated their WYD experience.

'Would you recommend WYD2011 in Madrid to someone who had not been to WYD -- e.g. your younger brother or sister, or a friend?'

Table 3.16 Cyouth: recommend WYD2011 Madrid to someone else (%).

Yes	98%
No	2%
Total	100%

Despite the distance and cost involved for Australians, the answer, from men and women of all ages, was a resounding, practically unanimous 'Yes!'.

4. Outcomes of participation in World Youth Day

Did WYD have any real impact on the participants?

Some sceptical observers questioned, before, during and after WYD, whether the event would really have any lasting impact on those who attended. A variety of ‘outcomes’ of WYD in pilgrims’ lives were explored in the survey. To what extent were these developments actually the fruit of WYD? The participants themselves were asked what changes in their attitudes or behaviour they considered to result from their having taken part in WYD.

Faith development

Attitude to God

Did your WYD experience change your understanding / feeling about God / Jesus / the Holy Spirit? Check all of the following that apply to you.

Table 4.1 Cyouth: Change of attitude towards God after WYD (sorted) (%).

I feel more confident in my belief in God -- that God is real	44%
I feel I have a closer relationship with Jesus	40%
I believe more strongly that God loves me	31%
Especially, I have a better understanding of the Holy Spirit	28%
I love God / Jesus more than I did	24%
I understand better how God is Father, Son and Spirit	16%
No	13%

How to read: 40% of attenders said that their WYD experience resulted in feeling they have a closer relationship with Jesus. Respondents could choose more than one item. Order of items has been rearranged.

Which pilgrims were more likely to experience spiritual growth in their attitude to God? Do the hopes and expectations they held prior to the event give any indication of what they were likely to experience at WYD?

Generally, hopes, expectations and outcomes are closely aligned. Fewer than half of those whose anticipation was focussed on things like ‘experiencing the buzz of being part of a huge crowd’, ‘having fun’ and ‘making friends’ reported changes in their attitude to God. The pilgrims who were already most devoted – regular in religious practice and strongly adhering to Catholic teaching – were most likely to report these outcomes with one exception: ‘feeling more confident in my belief in God’. Those who were previously *less* devoted were the most likely to report this outcome – understandably, since basic belief in God was already very strong in those who were more devoted. It was also the youngest who were more likely to express this increased confidence than those in either of the two older groups. Those over 25 were least likely to have experienced a change in their understanding of God or feeling about God as a result of WYD, since for them, these spiritual fundamentals were already more firmly established.

Religious commitment

Did your WYD experience change how you approach your faith? Check all of the following that apply to you.

Table 4.2 Cyouth: Change of approach to faith after WYD (sorted) (%).

I'm not embarrassed now to let others see that I'm a believer	43%
I'm more interested now in learning about my Catholic faith	37%
Now I want to live as a disciple of Jesus, a witness to him	30%
Up till WYD I was just going along with my family's religion, but now it's more because of my decision that I believe and want to be involved	30%
I feel more able to question aspects of my faith	24%
Not so much, because I feel that my faith was already very strong	17%
No, because faith is not a priority for me	4%
Actually WYD helped me to realise that this kind of religion is not for me	1%

How to read: 43% of attenders said that their WYD experience resulted in 'not [being] embarrassed now to let others see that I'm a believer'. Respondents could choose more than one item, so percentages add to more than 100%.

The first four items show a strengthening of religious commitment in different ways. While again, it is the most highly committed who show the greatest gains, there are also significant indications of growth among those who had looked forward to the social aspects of WYD. Even among those who had given a prominent place to 'having fun', 'partying' and 'sightseeing', among the aspects of WYD they were hoping to experience, 42% later felt that 'up until WYD I was just going along with my family's religion, but now it's more because of my decision that I believe and want to be involved'. Further, thirty-eight percent of them checked 'I'm not embarrassed now to let others see that I'm a believer', and 35% said 'I'm more interested now in learning about my Catholic faith'. Some reported that friends noticed a difference in them when they returned.

As in the previous questions about attitudes to God, the over 25 group were more likely to choose the 'Not so much ...' option, and it was the youngest pilgrims who were more likely to say that they had experienced some changes because of WYD: that now they were interested in learning more about their faith, not embarrassed to let others see that they were believers, and felt their faith had become more a matter of their own decision than just conformity with the family pattern. We have seen few male / female differences so far, but on the three items just mentioned, girls in the youngest age group 14-18 were significantly more likely to have chosen the option than boys the same age.

Moral conversion

The next question asked about 'moral conversion': accepting Jesus Christ as Lord of one's life and committing oneself to living in his Way. The preamble invited the respondents to discern 'real' change in themselves rather than mere 'wannabe' wistfulness.

'Probably most people would like to be a better person. But could you honestly say that your WYD experience has made you really determined to be different in any of the following ways? If so, check them.'

Table 4.3 Cyouth: Determined to be different after WYD (sorted) (%)

To match my behaviour to my faith	43%
To be more 'Christ-like' in my behaviour	35%
To be a follower of Christ, and live as he wants me to	33%
To accept Jesus as Lord in my life	30%
I already was committed to these things before I went to WYD	14%
I'd like to change in some of these ways, but I don't feel ready yet	7%
No, I don't feel my WYD experience has had this effect	5%

How to read: 30% of attenders said that their WYD experience resulted in their being determined to accept Jesus as Lord in their lives. Respondents could choose more than one item, so percentages add to more than 100%.

It is of course very difficult for everyone, even when we try to be most honest, to distinguish between the weak moral ambition that is really no more than wishful thinking, and real determination to reform our lives. The preamble to the question drew attention to this difficulty, and urged honesty and modesty in the self-assessment, but no individual really knows the genuineness of their resolution until they see its fruits in action. Respondents answered this question 'conservatively' – they seemed to sense its weight. For example, only 30% said that they were determined to accept Jesus as Lord in their lives. This restraint on the part of the pilgrims encourages the reader to put more faith in the sincerity and realism of the responses.

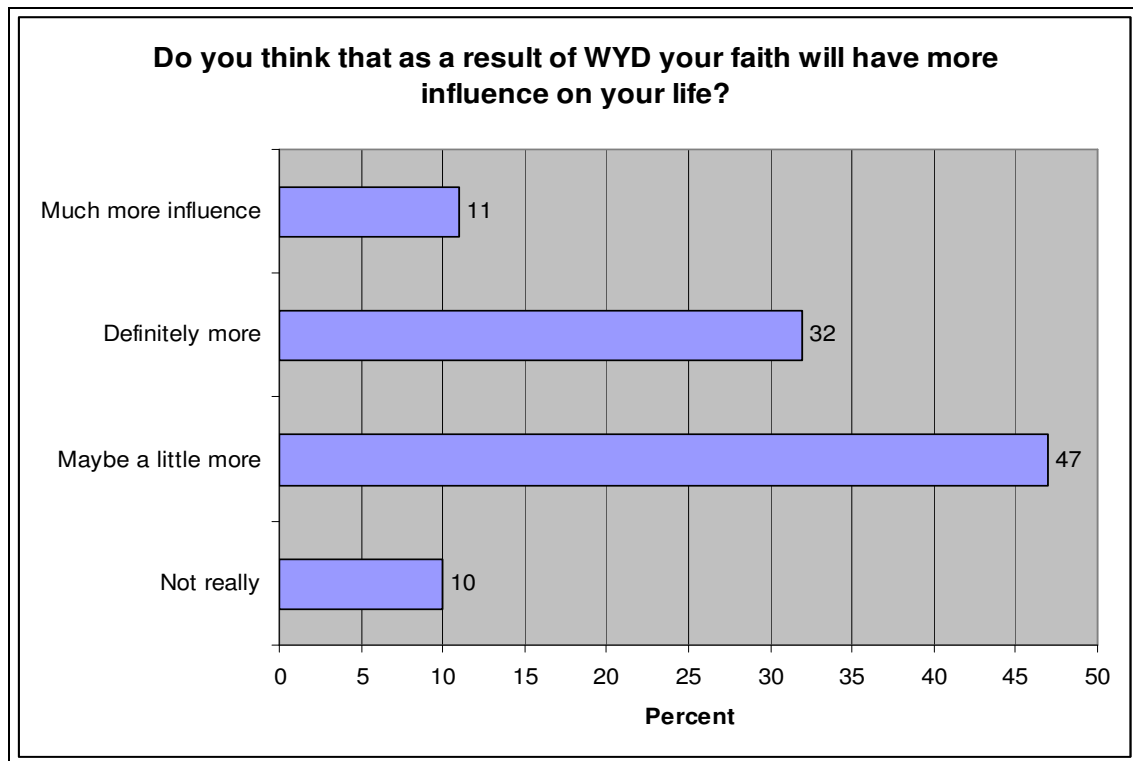
More than a third of WYD participants claimed to have found a renewed determination to follow Christ, choosing one or more of the first four options in Table 4.3. The proportion varied, since some options suggest a more radical and unrestricted commitment.

Those who named these changes in themselves did not choose the response indicating that they were already committed to these things before going to WYD08 – they were asserting that this was a new movement to be 'different' in these ways from how they were before, and that they believed this was due to their WYD experience. The youngest (14-18) and middle (19-24) age-groups were more likely than those 25 and over to feel that they had changed in these ways because of their WYD experience. Twenty-five percent of the 25-35 group said that they had come to WYD already committed to living in these ways; but even in this group, one-third or more indicated that they felt that some change in their attitudes was due to their WYD experience.

Influence of faith on daily life

The next question, along similar lines, was: '*Do you think that as a result of WYD your religious faith will have more influence on what you do in daily life?*'

Figure 4.1 Cyouth: Influence of faith in daily life (%)



This question on movement towards a more faith-filled life was again answered conservatively: only a minority were prepared to claim a definite change of this breadth. Nearly half of the youngest group (14-18) stayed with the option of 'maybe a little more' which does credit to their modesty; while 41% of them ventured to assert that their faith would definitely have more or much more influence on their life. The 19-35s were a little more confident: about half of them felt that the growth in faith's hold on their lives was definite and strong.

Frequency of attendance at Mass before and after WYD

On average, seventy-three percent of respondents said that prior to WYD, they had usually attended Mass every weekend or more often. The youngest group were 20% below the other two on this measure: 14-18yrs: 62%, 19-24yrs: 83%, 25-35yrs: 82%. These percentages are extraordinarily high compared with the average for Australian Catholic youth.

We know from the National Church Life survey of 255 Australian Catholic parishes in 2001 that about 16.4% of Catholics over 14 attend Mass on a typical weekend, and that for those aged 15-34, the percentage is considerably lower: 7.3%.⁵

In our book *The Spirit of Generation Y*,⁶ the authors of the present paper reported on a comprehensive 2005 survey of young Australians aged 13-24, in which 20% of the Catholics

⁵ These percentages can easily be calculated from the table given on the ACBC Pastoral Projects Office website at <http://www.ppo.catholic.org.au/researchcharts/ncls.shtml#massAttendrs>. The attendance count and survey in 2006 found that attendance had declined somewhat further (see http://www.ppo.catholic.org.au/pdf/MediaReleaseCatholicPopulation_5June2008.pdf).

⁶ Mason, M. Singleton, A. & Webber, R. 2007 *The Spirit of Generation Y: Young People's Spirituality in a Changing Australia*, John Garratt Publishing, Melbourne, p. 100.

reported that they attended weekly. To quote from what we wrote at the time: ‘It is a well-known phenomenon in sociology of religion that self-reports of attendance at religious services are always higher than head-counts of attenders, and the estimates of experienced pastors. Acknowledging this discrepancy does not imply accusing respondents of overt untruthfulness. It seems likely that ‘social desirability bias’ plays a part: people’s self- reports are drawn, not fully consciously, in the direction of what they think they ought to be doing rather than what they actually do. And people who state, optimistically, that they attend every week actually miss some weeks because of absence from home, illness or other commitments.’⁷

But even allowing for some over-estimation of pilgrims’ previous Mass attendance, it is clear that World Youth Day attracted young people who were much more regularly involved in weekend worship than typical young Catholics. Given these high levels of church attendance prior to WYD, it is not surprising that when asked whether, after WYD, they would attend Mass more frequently, most said that their attendance would be about the same. About 1 in 4 overall said that, as a result of their WYD experience, they would go to Mass more frequently; but among those who previously attended less than monthly, 43% said they were going to attend more often.

Peer support in church attendance

Fifty-eight percent of those who attend more often than once a week said that most of their friends also attend ‘pretty regularly’. Among weekly attenders, fewer than half (41%) could say this of their friends, and it was least likely among the 14-18-year-olds (35%, compared with 56% of the 25-35-year-olds) . Those who attended only occasionally had friends who mostly did the same – only one in five of them had friends who attended regularly.

Changes in other practices after WYD

Fifty-four percent, especially the youngest, said that they are definitely praying more frequently than they did before attending WYD; 34% said they were attending Reconciliation more often, especially those over 18. Forty-seven percent said that they were contributing more to their local parish. Many also stated that since returning from WYD, they are talking more about issues of faith / religion / spirituality with other returned pilgrims (68%). But fewer than half of the school-age group were discussing these issues more than before with family members and others who did not attend WYD.

Attitude to oneself

‘Since going to WYD do you think you have a more positive view of yourself, your life and your future?’

Table 4.4 Cyouth: View of self and life after WYD (%)

Much more positive	34%
More positive	47%
About the same	18%
More negative	1%
Total	100%

The strongly positive response to this question varied little by gender, but those aged 14-18 were a little more likely to report a more positive view. We will discuss this important variable more fully in later reports.

⁷ It is also possible that those who seldom attend are somewhat less likely to respond to surveys. Nevertheless, we do not believe that the sample of respondents to the post-WYD survey is heavily biased in favour of the highly religious. We will present the evidence supporting this view in the section of our final report where the representativeness of the two surveys is discussed.

Social development

Youth culture focuses strongly on the individual and their fulfilment; so the Pilgrims' Progress 2008 research project has taken a special interest in the ways in which some young people overcome the narrow focus on the self and reach out to others.

Belonging to Catholic groups

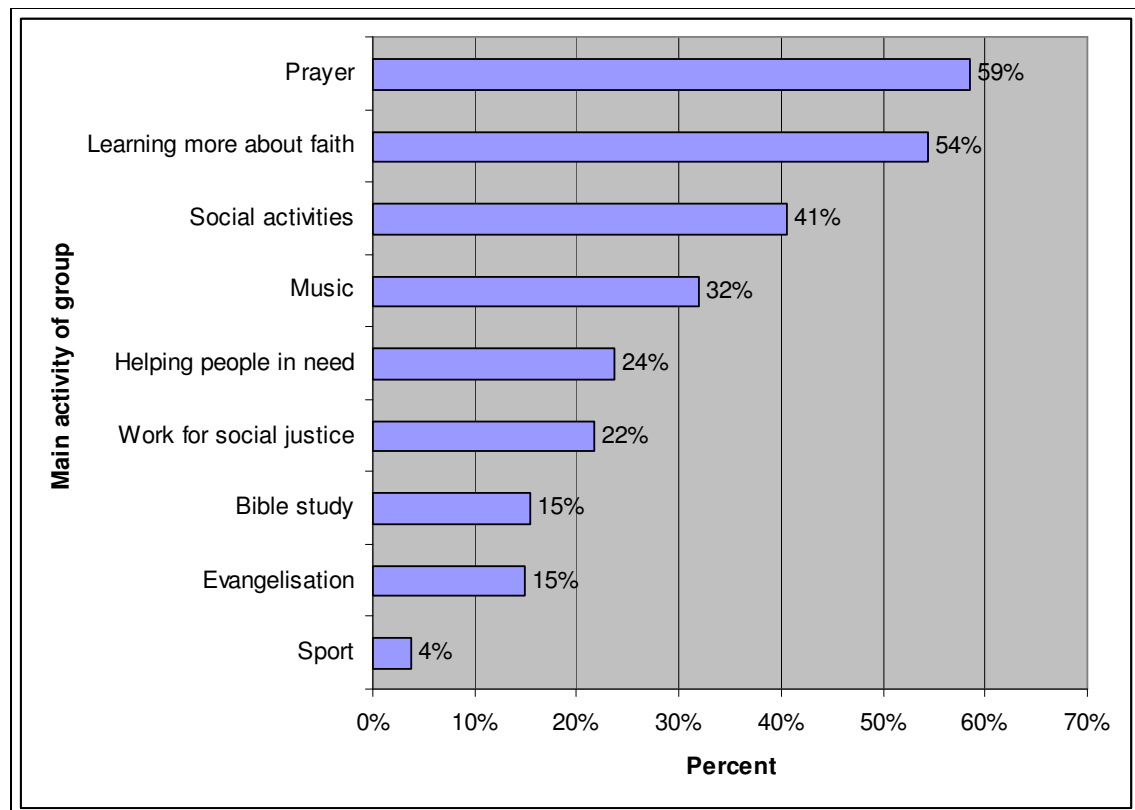
Many young people are hesitant to join organisations that make demands on them, and so are cut off from the support which Christian organisations provide for living the Christian life. So it was important to discover whether pilgrims are involved in Catholic organisations. There are so many kinds of these organisations that no adequate checklist could be devised. An open-ended question was asked; the results are still being analysed.

Forty-one percent of pilgrims indicated that they were involved in one or more Catholic groups, (nearly half of the post-school group, but among school-age pilgrims, only a third). Thirty-two percent indicated that they joined the group as a result of WYD.

Next, they were asked to indicate the main activities of the group with which they are most involved.

'Thinking of the Catholic group with which you are most involved, what activities does the group do, mainly? You can check up to 3 activities.'

Figure 4.2 Youth: Main activity of Catholic groups to which pilgrims belong (%).



How to read this table: 54% of respondents said that 'learning more about faith' was one of the main activities of the group they were most involved in. They could choose more than one activity, so the percentages add to over 100%, and items have been rearranged in descending order by how often they were mentioned.

Over half the pilgrims said their main group focussed on prayer and learning more about faith, while other groups engaged in social activities or music. More than 20% aimed at helping people in need and the same proportion were working for social justice. About one in seven of the groups focussed on evangelism. The youngest pilgrims were much more likely to be involved in a music group and much less likely than older youth to be taking part in evangelisation.

Social networking

Almost two-thirds (64%) said that they had logged on to Xt3, the social networking site for WYD pilgrims – although this does not imply that they have remained active on the site, nor that it is their preferred social networking site. In both the school-age and immediately post-school age-groups, women were significantly more likely than men to have logged on to Xt3.

Changes in attitudes and behaviour towards others

There is clear evidence that many pilgrims have changed the ways in which they think about and respond to others, and that they attribute the changes to their participation in WYD.

In post-WYD interviews, pilgrims were asked a question similar to that later used in the survey: ‘As a result of going to WYD, do you think there’s anything that you’re going to change in the way you think or believe or act?’ Quite a number said they had changed as a result of attending WYD and that these changes were noticed by family members, friends and work colleagues. They had stopped doing some things and started to do others.

There were frequent comments on this theme in interviews, some of them astonishingly frank, self-revelatory and humble. A number of young pilgrims spoke about personal failings such as unkindness, intolerance and rudeness and said that they were genuinely trying to improve.

Even though I found that going to WYD was a good and positive experience, I found myself reflecting afterwards on the events that had occurred this year. I was feeling remorse when I was thinking about all the wrong things I have done because I had hurt myself and others around me. I decided to help myself by getting help and changing my bad ways. I also discovered more about myself. I want to be happy with myself and do what I want at my own free will (F 20).

WYD was a great experience that changed the way I react in new situations by putting others before myself (M 17).

Even my family saw that I had changed for the better. I was a more positive person (F 16).

It enabled me to be kinder to more people (M 15).

Changes of this kind were evident both among the highly committed and the less religious. There was a strong desire to link the way they lived their lives with a greater understanding of scripture and the church’s teachings as evidenced by ‘Melinda’:

I guess it was a reminder, in general I guess to try to live, always live my best and live ethically I guess and I think it could give you a network to know. Now I have friends who are there to support you when there are decisions to be made. Yes sometimes it is to follow all the rules of the Church. I think just having met those and having those people continually in my life it’s a bit of a reminder, it keeps you in check. It stirs up a desire to read my Bible more but I don’t know, you have these intentions but coming back to university, it’s life again, I’m hoping to read more Scripture and understand a few of the

topics brought up by the Pope, I'd like to explore the Catholic Catechism a bit more on my own. It encourages more independent research and growth (F 23).

There were several accounts of people feeling inspired to small generous actions during WYD. Pilgrims gave time, possessions and food to others. One person gave his sweater to a homeless person sleeping in the park; another gave her WYD bag to an elderly lady who said it would mean so much to her to have one. This pilgrim said that she felt inspired by WYD to act in keeping with the teachings of Jesus.

Social ethic

In the survey, participants were asked first about fundamental attitudes towards others. Did they, as a result of WYD, feel really determined to change in any of the following ways?

Table 4.5 Cyouth: Determination to change attitudes to others after WYD (%).

To be more forgiving, patient, tolerant	52%
To be more considerate of others	41%
To actually put others before myself	35%

How to read: 41% of attenders said that their WYD experience resulted in their being determined to be more considerate of others. Respondents could choose more than one item, so percentages add to more than 100%.

Over half of the respondents aspired to show more consideration and gentleness to others: 52% of attenders chose one or more of the three items, and attributed their change of attitude to their participation in WYD. A larger proportion of the youngest group chose these three items, compared with the oldest.

And a little later in the survey, they were asked whether, as a result of WYD, they felt more motivated to engage in the following kinds of actions for the benefit of others.

Because of your WYD experience, do you feel more motivated to do any of the following? Check any that apply, or if none, check No.

Table 4.6 Cyouth: Altruistic behaviour after WYD (sorted) (%).

Be tolerant towards someone hard to get along with	58%
Forgive someone you've been angry at	56%
Spend time with someone who needs some extra care for some reason	51%
Stand up to a bully	28%
No, not more motivated as a result of WYD	21%

How to read: 28% of attenders said that their WYD experience resulted in their feeling more motivated to 'stand up to a bully'. Respondents could choose more than one item, so percentages add to more than 100%.

As usual, the highest proportions choosing these items were from the youngest group. Fewer of the over-18s changed their attitudes as a result of WYD, but in most cases had adopted them long before.

A number of returned pilgrims felt that they had significantly changed the ways in which they think and act towards becoming more accepting and appreciative of others beyond their immediate circle:

I've found I'm a lot more humble... I've always been very loud and out there sort of a person, but for some reason I just seem to have taken a step down since I came back and I think I have a greater appreciation for other people and the thoughts and opinions of those around me. A kind of acceptance of difference and tolerance (F 23).

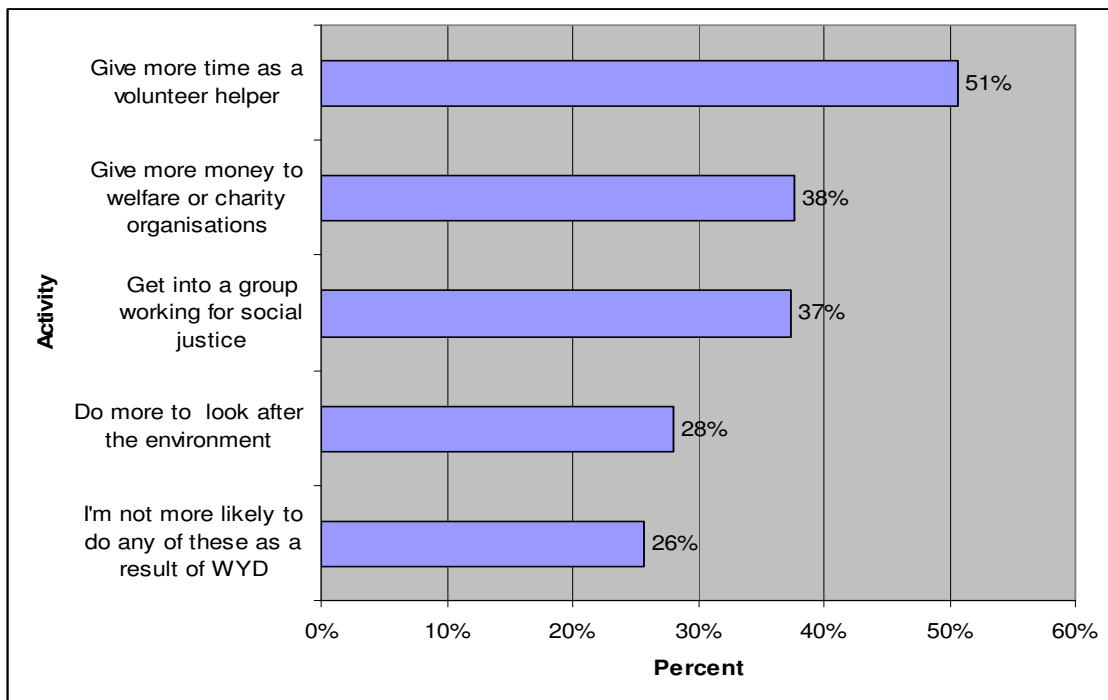
I think I've learned to be more tolerant of people because when you are with 400,000 people, [many of whom] can't actually speak English or who can't communicate with you, you just have to be tolerant and have to accept that they don't understand the same customs that we understand (M 20).

Civic volunteer activities

Further questions aimed to move attention from the circle of family and friends to the wider community, inquiring about pilgrims' 'civic engagement'.

Participants were asked if they were more likely as a result of WYD to undertake a number of civic activities.

Figure 4.3 Cyouth: Civic activities undertaken as a result of WYD (%).



Three quarters of those aged 35 or under were anticipating doing one or more community activities in the following year. More of the youngest than of the two older groups affirmed that they were intending to engage in these activities as a result of WYD, except in the case of donating more money; on this the groups were more balanced; presumably the youngest had less discretionary income than those in the two older groups. Over a third of pilgrims were intending to give both money and time to help others.

Fifty-one percent indicated that they planned to give some time as a volunteer in a helping organisation. Interviews revealed that some pilgrims who had already been doing volunteer work prior to going to WYD day had raised their level of community involvement. Some took on more difficult and confronting volunteer work, others who had not been involved prior to attending WYD were now beginning to do so.

Reasons for Volunteering

When returned pilgrims were asked the reasons for the increase in their involvement in these kinds of activities, they gave various reasons, all of which related in some way to their

spiritual or religious life. Many pilgrims were able to clearly articulate the link between their volunteer work and the church's teaching. Some pilgrims said that attending the WYD Masses and catecheses provided them with a moral framework in which they were more oriented towards helping others.

I think the Masses and stuff was a way for me to look around and go: 'Okay well we're here as one, what are they going to be like when they get home' and I think, that's my big spiritual thing, I think me being so into social justice issues, that's my whole spiritual thing, I think I would just like, once I finish school I'd love to go work somewhere with children in third world countries just to help out, give them that sense of hope (F 16).

Other pilgrims stated that going to WYD confirmed the importance of volunteering and social service as an expression of their faith. There was a strong desire to live out the teachings of Jesus to a greater degree:

I volunteer at the soup van and go around to houses and see people that were less fortunate and that itself has been an awakening for me, I found myself turning back to the church as a way of reflecting on it. I have worked myself back into it and World Youth Day has just refreshed it even more. At the moment I'm on the Student Association and our spirituality and social justice convenor has deferred (her course) so I'm taking over her role and just organising events and stuff to raise money for different charities and that around us (F 23).

For some pilgrims, being engaged in volunteer work made them feel that they were doing God's work. Even though they could not articulate clearly the Biblical foundation or the church's teaching, they had a sense that it was what God wanted them to do.

I'm also a volunteer for the CFA. There are some parts that you do see. Like when you like say go to a fire and put out the fire and where you just grab someone whose house it is and sit down and console them and stuff like that. Then you feel like you're doing some of God's work (M 19).

Having the opportunity to engage with people from Third World countries resulted in some pilgrims becoming more sensitive to the needs of people in these areas. Some pilgrims came to appreciate that being a Christian required them to respond in some way to the plight of others. For some this resulted in a taking an interest in social justice issues, for others it also required action on their part.

Me and my brother are very 'Well let's get out there and do this, we've got this money, let's use it to our advantage for these guys' and I think a combination of that and being able to travel and see some things like people on the streets in places like Vietnam and Thailand, it's just mind-boggling. Hang on, I live in this place that's practically a palace and they live on the streets. Why can't we do something about that? I think in a lot of cases like with Vietnam it's to do with their Communist government and stuff, but there's just so many things, you go well I can help out with that even if it's just in a little way, donate a little bit of money every now and then (F 17).

5. Conclusion

This is the second working paper reporting on the post-WYD survey, the third component of the 'Pilgrims' Progress 2008' research project on WYD. The report has been designed to provide the Australian bishops and those involved in ministry to youth with some preliminary findings from the project in a very brief format, with only minimal analysis.

Only the responses of Australian participants who were in WYD's 'target group': Catholics up to the age of 35, were examined.

This is not by any means the whole story of what the WYD pilgrims experienced. Here, we have tried to let them speak for themselves in describing their WYD experience, and to report their own suggestions for follow-up to WYD without judging, but also without necessarily endorsing them.

A much more thorough analysis of the background of those who attended, of the underlying dynamics of the event, and of the significance of the findings, is in preparation for our final report, which will also consider in detail the implications for ministry to young people. We will consider the questions:

- Who went to WYD, why did they go; why did others not attend?
- What are the strengths and vulnerabilities of the style of faith expressed by the pilgrims?
- What communities are supporting the returned pilgrims and helping their faith continue to develop?
- Many pilgrims seek follow-up activities which attempt to recapture the atmosphere of WYD – will this provide lasting satisfaction and growth?
- Are the resources available for youth ministry best utilised in staging large-scale gatherings and events?
- How can the benefits of WYD be spread from the relatively small proportion of Catholic youth who attended it to the wider group who did not (98% of young Catholics in most dioceses)? Will WYD-style catecheses and liturgies be effective with unevangelised Catholics?
- How should leaders be recruited and trained for youth ministry?
- What structures of community and strategies of evangelisation are required?

Yet even while these important questions remain unanswered, it is clear from this brief look at the survey responses from Australians, that the event was rated highly successful by the young participants, who reported many ways in which they felt their experiences had been helpful in their spiritual development.

The responses of pilgrims differed greatly according to their national religious culture. The spirituality and history of different national churches – their 'way of being Catholic' – strongly shape individuals' spiritual outlook. So later reports from the project will compare the experiences of pilgrims from Australia, New Zealand, USA, Canada, UK & Ireland, Asia and other countries.

Several articles are in preparation to make the project's findings more widely available in both popular and academic forms. And the research team will attend the 2009 annual

meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion in Denver, USA, in October, to present a session of four papers analysing the findings of the project.

News of project developments as well as the text of various reports will be found on the project website: <http://dlibrary.acu.edu.au/research/wyd/> . The survey questionnaire is also on the site.

Appendix I. What is ‘statistical significance’?

Translating the statistical jargon into non-technical language (with some inevitable sacrifice of accuracy), statistical significance can be explained as follows.

There were about 170,000 registered attenders at WYD who used English. These are the ‘*population*’ of this study. The survey of attenders after WYD, in November 2008, received 4,776 responses. These make up our ‘*sample*’ of attenders.

The question naturally arises: how do we know that something we find in the sample is also true of the population? For example, there were almost twice as many females as males in the sample. Was this also the case among the whole population of English-speaking attenders?

The answer depends on two things: is the sample properly representative of the population, or is it odd, untypical, biased? ⁸ In our final report we will present the detailed technical case for the representativeness of the sample. But even in a representative sample, some finding – e.g. an apparent difference between two age-groups, or between males and females, could be just a result of ‘chance’ – meaning that no sample represents a population with complete accuracy, and samples will differ from the population and from each other in random ways.

To say that a finding is ‘statistically significant’ means that a ‘statistic’ found in the sample (a statistic is a score on some measure such as a mean, a proportion or a correlation) is very likely to be true also in the whole population of attenders, and not likely to be due to a random variation in this particular sample. Statistical significance is calculated by applying mathematical formulas which take all the relevant factors into account.

To illustrate: given our sample of 4776 cases, an estimate that 66% of pilgrims were female has a ‘margin of error’ of about 1.3%: that is, the percentage of females in the population is likely to fall between 64.7% and 67.3%. In statistical terminology, ‘the 0.95 confidence interval around the estimate is 1.3%’. In simple terms, this means that if someone took repeated samples of 4776 cases from the population of attenders, the percentage of females would fall outside this range in only one sample out of 20.

Often, it is differences between groups that are of interest. Whenever, in these reports, a difference between two groups is mentioned in the text, the difference will be one that is ‘statistically significant’ at the .05 level or better. For example: here is an example of an apparent difference which does not pass that test, and so is not reported: 33% of the 539 attenders in the sample who came from the USA/Canada region said that sightseeing was one of the most enjoyable features of attending WYD for them, and 28% of the 243 attenders in the sample who came from the ‘UK etc.’ said the same. The 5% difference is not statistically significant at the .05 level, given the number of cases in each group. By contrast, only 5% of Australians/New Zealanders mentioned sightseeing among their ‘most enjoyable’ activities (presumably most had been to Sydney before) and the difference between them and the North Americans (33% minus 5% = 28%) is statistically significant. To be ‘significant at the .05

⁸ The final report will include further details on the composition of each sample and the response rates to the two surveys.

level' means, in this case, that if someone took repeated samples of the Australian/New Zealand and North American attenders, the difference between them on this issue would occur purely by chance (i.e. without there being any corresponding difference in the whole population) in only one sample out of 20 or fewer. (In fact this difference is so large that one would have to take tens of thousands of repeated samples, for this difference to occur even once by chance.)

Why can't we just have a handy rule of thumb that says that a difference between two groups has to be, say 7% or more in order to be statistically significant? Because significance depends on other factors besides the size of the difference: especially the size of each group, and the amount of variability in each group. So sometimes, a difference of 5% will be significant, and in other cases, a difference of 10% will not attain significance.

Statistical significance is not the same as importance, or 'significance' in the ordinary, non-statistical sense. A finding may be statistically significant (meaning it is probably true of the population, and not the product of chance) and yet be relatively small and unimportant. So the testing of statistical significance acts merely as a kind of minimal check: so that explanatory arguments are not built on the shaky foundation of a 'finding' that is quite likely not to be true of the population, but merely the result of sampling variability.

Appendix II. Questionnaire used in the post-WYD survey

The survey questionnaire will be found on the project website:

<http://dlibrary.acu.edu.au/research/wyd/>