



Cardinal McCarrick on World Youth Day "The Call to Believe and Be Proud That You're a Catholic"

COLOGNE, Germany, AUG. 28, 2005 (Zenit.org).- Organizers of World Youth Day in Cologne expressed their hope that the young pilgrims learned a lot about their faith during their visit so they can take it with them.

Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, who attended the event in Cologne, shares that hope. The 75-year-old the archbishop of Washington, D.C., shared his impressions of World Youth Day with ZENIT.

Q: What has this 20th World Youth Day meant to you and your diocesan group?

Cardinal McCarrick: I think it's been a great experience -- just as each WYD is. When John Paul the Great was our Pope, the WYDs were an extraordinary time of joy and gathering for Catholic young people and, of course I expected that the same sort of thing would be true this time with Pope Benedict and I'm happy to say it was. ...

The young people were so enthusiastic about meeting the new Pope, about seeing him and listening to him and he fulfilled their expectations.

The Holy Father was very warm, he was very gracious -- he has a different style than his predecessor, obviously because he's a different person and he wants to be his own person.

He's a very authentic man and I think that he came across that way to them. They knew that they were going to have a different experience but it was a very pleasant and holy experience.

The youth found a man who is very humble, who is very bright, very wise and very brilliant, and yet, a man who was so obviously happy to be with them as he waved and smiled. ...

Q: There were other elements which assisted in promoting this sense of holiness weren't there?

Cardinal McCarrick: The music was wonderful. I was so impressed by the music that the organizers had put together. At the vigil and then again at the Sunday Mass, the musical components helped me to get carried away by the whole experience.

This, as part of a stunning liturgy, tempted me to take an extra book of the Mass that was on my chair. I'll bring it with me to Washington now and see if we can learn some of those hymns ourselves because they are so powerful. And, I think that when the young people joined in, too, they really had a great time.

Q: It is apparent that the week and events were colored by some beautiful manifestations, especially brought to the front by international groups. How did these encourage an attraction to the faith?

Cardinal McCarrick: We had a group of about 300 people from Washington that we know of ... so that was a great start. I think that one of the most important things for our young people was getting to meet people from other cultures and other countries.

They would tell you straight away -- "Oh, I met a guy from Africa ... or South America ... I met a girl from Poland," and this was a wonderful thing, that they could taste and see the universality of the Church. I myself had a chance to speak and preach in German frequently, which recalled my studies in Switzerland earlier on in my life.

They had known about it and we had taught them about it before and have really exposed them to the "catholicity" of the Church but here they see it played out in front of them.

People talking different languages they don't understand -- all discussing the great mysteries of our religion that they share. This is one of the special things they will always treasure.

Q: Did you have a chance to live this yourself, Cardinal McCarrick?

Cardinal McCarrick: I was privileged in having two catecheses -- one on Wednesday where I had 10,000 people, and that was great! It was in the stadium and I think it worked out well -- I was caught up into it because the Lord was certainly present in the youngsters.