



SPIRIT ON 7TH STREET

AN UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL LOOK AT THE
MINISTRIES OF SAINT HENRY'S

World Youth Day 2023

At the end of July and early August, a group of St. Henry's parishioners joined up with St. Helena's parish in St. Paul to attend World Youth Day. Our group was 42 people total.

Our pilgrimage began with a tour of Barcelona, Spain. The highlight was seeing the La Sagrada Familia, a basilica in Barcelona. Afterwards, we took a bus ride to Lourdes, France and went to the candlelit rosary procession that evening. The singing, the candles, and the people made it a beautiful, faith-filled experience. The next morning, we were able to spend the day at Lourdes. We went to the baths, where they used to have you fully immersed in the water. Since Covid,



to drink of the water from the spring when she appeared at Lourdes.

From Lourdes we headed back to Spain to Santiago de Compostela where we toured the cathedral. The remains of St. James the Greater and the world's largest thurible (incense burner) are in the Santiago de Compostela Cathedral. We started with Mass in the morning and at the very end of Mass, they lit the coal in the thurible. We were excited because we didn't think that we would actually get to see the thurible swing! It swung from the ceiling on the left side of the cathedral to the ceiling on the right side of the cathedral, this was my favorite part of the trip!

At Fatima, we were able to attend outdoor Mass. Our stop there was only 3 hours. The youth that were with me convinced me that we needed a new rosary for the Fyshbowl at St. Henry's. We looked for one at Lourdes, but they were expensive. So we decided to look at Fatima. It turned out to be a good decision, we found a wall rosary from Fatima



they do a water ceremony instead. They give you three pours of water: one for your hands, one for your face, and one to drink since the Virgin Mary instructed St. Bernadette

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and now our youth room has a souvenir!



Our next stop was Lisbon, Portugal for World Youth Day. World Youth Day happens every few years and is a week-long conference that takes place in locations all

around the host city. Our group was assigned to a location each morning for a catechetical session that was in English. Our location was a park in the middle of Lisbon. We had to ride the subway each day to get where we were going. Our group had bright orange

shirts to wear for all World Youth Day activities because there were so many people. This made finding each other and sticking together much easier. We listened to speakers at the Catechetical sessions (Bishop Barron and Bishop Fisher from Australia) and ended each session with Mass. After one of the catechetical sessions, we were attempting to go to a concert on the other side of the city. All public transportation was packed. We had a 45 minute ride on a bus in which we were crammed together, shoulder to shoulder with three people standing in the width of the aisle. When we got to our destination, the roads were all



blocked because we were across the street from a monastery that Pope Francis was speaking in. The police thought that Pope Francis would drive down the road, so we decided to wait for him. When we saw snipers on the roof, the excitement grew because everyone thought the Pope would be coming out soon! However, we waited for about 4 hours in the sun and crowds to see Pope Francis and when he left the monastery, he went the opposite direction! We all kept a positive attitude and headed back to the hotel for dinner. Most of our dinners were at 8:30 p.m. and we didn't get to bed until about 11 p.m. most nights. We were up by 6:30 most mornings to go running and to be at our catechetical sessions on time.

The main part of World Youth Day is the overnight. We went to a field on Saturday evening to attend Adoration with Pope Francis and then slept overnight to attend Sunday Mass with Pope Francis in the morning. The morning we were leaving to go to the field, Bishop Williams came to our hotel to celebrate Mass. His main message in his homily was that all suffering ends in joy. This was a very fitting homily for



what was about to come. Our group split up and we sent half of our group to the field right after morning Mass to save us a spot. We were in an extreme heat warning and the temperature was 104 degrees that day. I was in the second half of the group and we left for the field around 10:00 a.m. We had about a 2.5 mile hike with all our camping gear on our back. I carried extra liters of water for the group on my front and about a half mile into our hike we were given a meal pack of 4 meals for the field. The meal pack included cans of tuna, sardines, bagels, 1.75 liter of water, canned vegetables,

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and squeezable fruit pouches. Carrying all of this in the heat was just the beginning! We then started to encounter the huge crowds because everyone was heading to the field. The roads were all blocked off so we could walk on the wide roadways. We all had to enter through a gate and show our credentials on an overpass but they weren't opening the gates until 1:30 pm, so we sat on an overpass waiting in the heat. Once they opened the overpass, the crowds of people had to be funneled through the gates causing people to be squeezed and even faint. Once we made it to the field, we had to lay out our camping mats to hold our spot. With so many people, everyone was looking for a space to campout for the night. The field was a giant, rocky, dirt field. We ended up close to a large outdoor monitor which was nice because we were so far away from the stage and altar where the Pope was going to be (we couldn't see the Pope at all from where we were.) Our group sat down in the field and either napped, traded, or started playing cards under umbrellas and whatever other shade structures we could make. A lot of the youth in our group loved to trade. We brought buttons for trading and the youth would trade with other youth from different countries for bracelets, keychains, prayer cards, rosaries, pins, and if you were a good trader, you would end up with a shirt or a flag! We had some good traders in our group who ended up with a shirt and a flag.

That evening, the Pope arrived. He spoke a few words in Spanish. I had brought a radio and we could tune in to hear the translation in English, but it was hard to hear because there was so much noise around us. We then had Adoration. It was beautiful to see so many people enter into a period of silence and a posture of



reverence. After Adoration, we attempted to sleep. The chaperones each took an hour shift throughout the night to be awake. There were a group of Germans by us laughing and talking throughout the night and other groups were playing drums and singing. I was scared I might get stepped on because people were walking through our camping area. Looking out at the field, it was just a sea of people, I couldn't see the end of all the people!

The next morning, a DJ priest started playing music bright and early. We were able to watch the sunrise over the field. Pope Francis drove through the many sections of the field, but unfortunately didn't come by our section. We had Mass at 9:00 a.m. with 1.5 million people. The music was beautiful, but even more so was the unity among the faithful of the Church from around the world. After Mass, we packed up and started our hike back to the bus. As we walked, many people would ask us where we were from. When we would mention USA, they would start chanting, "USA, USA, USA." Seeing the many flags from different countries being held high and the joy of encountering each other made me realize the peace that we can have with each other throughout the world, in Christ.

Having not showered for over 24 hours, and sitting in 104 degree temperature on Saturday and 110 degree temperature on Sunday, we now loaded a bus for a 6 hour drive to Avila, Spain. We arrived at our hotel late that evening and were able to wash off all the dirt and grime from the field. The next day, we toured Avila, had Mass at the Church where the birthplace of Saint Teresa of Avila is preserved, and walked the outside walls of the city. This completed our



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pilgrimage.

Overall, the long bus rides, the heat, the little sleep, the long waits for lunch and dinner, and the field experience made World Youth Day a real pilgrimage. It was an experience that I will not forget!

In Christ,

Mary Roberg

Testimonies from some of those who attended:

"WYD 2023 was such a blessing and great experience. There isn't anything else like it, it is a completely unique event. It is definitely a sacrifice to attend, with not great food, sleeping in a dirty, dusty and rocky field and experiencing high temperatures. It was a beautiful trip and I am so glad I went!" -

Jacob R.



"It was such a powerful experience to see so many Catholics from around the world in one place. The patriotism of every country and the enthusiasm for other's patriotism created a strong sense of unity in a world of division. World Youth Day was a true reminder that we are one, holy, catholic, and apostolic." -Beth D.

"My name is Lucy, I'm in 12th grade and this was my experience at World Youth Day 2023. The travel days

were super long and quite exhausting. I did a lot of walking. I visited a lot of different churches which were so beautiful; all of the European architecture is stunning. Going to Fatima was so amazing; I got to see the tombs of Jacinta and Francisco. In my group there were about 20 seminarians so it so cool to be able to pray with them and listen to their Gregorian chants on all the bus rides. I also got to hear talks from Chris Stefanick and Jason Evert and got to have Eucharistic Adoration with them every day which was so peaceful and their talks were so inspiring. I got to go the beach one day and it was so nice to relax with all the busyness. There were so many people everywhere but it was so incredible to meet Catholics from all over the world. This trip was definitely the highlight of my summer."

