



## **WYD Commissioning Mass Homily**

**By the Most Rev Timothy Costelloe SDB  
Archbishop of Perth**

St Mary's Cathedral, Perth  
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### **Introduction**

This morning we are joined in the Cathedral not only by our regular parishioners and visitors from many parts of the country and indeed the world. This happens every Sunday here in St Mary's and I hope you all know how welcome you all are. Today, we are also joined by a very special group of people. We are joined by the pilgrims who will be setting out, some in just a few days, to travel to Brazil for World Youth Day where, together with hundreds of thousands of other young Catholics from every part of the globe, they will take part in an experience of faith, of hope and of love which may well mark them for the rest of their lives. To all of you, then, World Youth Day pilgrims from our archdiocese for 2013, I offer a special welcome as together we thank you for your enthusiasm, your commitment, your sense of adventure, and your courage. In today's gospel we will hear about Jesus sending seventy-two disciples out ahead of him to prepare the people for his coming. Could it be more than just a coincidence that, even though not everyone is here this morning, we are in fact sending seventy-two people on pilgrimage to Brazil? Perhaps the Lord is saying to you, as he said to that first group of pilgrims, "Carry my peace with you – carry the news of the Kingdom of God with you – share your faith with those you meet – and know that your names are written in heaven".

We will pray for you on this journey just as we pray for you now as, in this Mass, you are commissioned formally as pilgrims. Please pray for us when you join the Holy Father in Rio in just a few weeks' time.

### **Homily**

During the week I was in Sydney attending a Conference being hosted by the Sydney Campus of Notre Dame University. Over lunch one day I was talking to some of the other bishops who, like us, are preparing to send their young people to Brazil for World Youth Day. They too were about to celebrate Commissioning Masses for their pilgrims, just as we are doing this morning here in the Cathedral. Not all of them, however, were doing it in quite the same way. In some dioceses a special Mass was being held in the Cathedral either last Friday night or on an evening sometime this coming week. Here in Perth I was very keen to celebrate the Commissioning Mass at this Sunday morning Mass because it seems to me, and I wanted to make clear to all of us, that our young pilgrims do not go as isolated individuals or even as a group who will hopefully bond together well over the coming weeks. More than that, our pilgrims, our young people, go as our representatives. They carry with them, for the most part, the faith they have learnt in their families, in their schools, and in their parishes. This means,



I think, that they will carry with them something of us, of our archdiocese, of the faith that has built up the Church here in Perth. For that reason they need to know that they go with our blessing and our prayers, just as we need to be reminded that, in them, we too are somehow taking part in this great event.

World Youth Day is a remarkable phenomenon. Pope John Paul II, whom we have just heard is to be canonized a saint later this year, inaugurated this celebration when, in 1986, he invited young Catholics to gather in Rome. Since then there have been eleven of these world youth days in various countries around the world, including here in Australia when, in 2008, World Youth Day was held in Sydney. For those who think the Church is dying, or who believe that the message and person of Christ are no longer able to appeal to young people, the extraordinary numbers of people, especially young people, who make great sacrifices to take part in these events, remind us that the Holy Spirit still calls people to Christ and to his Church and still moves us by the power of the gospel message. One of the largest gatherings in human history occurred when over five million people attended World Youth Day in the Philippines in 1995. Who knows how many people will gather in Rio to greet the first Latin American Pope in history as he visits the largest Catholic country in the world!

Impressive though the numbers are, the real value of World Youth Day lies in the faith which impels people to take part and in the faith with which so many of them will return home in a few weeks' time. World Youth Day is a celebration of our catholic faith and this means, quite simply, that it is a celebration of Jesus Christ, who calls to us to live our lives as richly, as fully, as joyfully and with as much integrity as we can. In other words it is a celebration of Jesus who calls us to make our discipleship, our following of him, the central concern of our lives. "Come to me," he cries out in the gospel, "and I will give you rest." "Without me," he says at the Last Supper, "you can do nothing – but if you live in me you will bear great fruit". "I have come that you might have life" he announces in St John's gospel, "life in all its fullness".

This is what our faith in Christ and our following of him promises us: the gift of life as it was meant to be and as, deep down, we all want it to be: a life of deep, deep joy, of great generosity and kindness, of real honesty and integrity, a life of profound peace and enriching love.

We forget this so easily of course and find ourselves looking for all these things but in precisely the wrong places. We so easily substitute selfishness for generosity, deceitfulness for honesty, resentment and disdain for love and acceptance. And yet the words and promises of Jesus still stand and still call out to us: "Come to me, learn from me, and follow me."

These are the words which Jesus is addressing to each of our pilgrims as they prepare to leave for Brazil, just as he is addressing them to all those here this morning who can't go to Brazil. It is true that you don't have to travel quite so far to encounter Jesus. You can encounter him in your families and among your friends, you can encounter him in the beauty of the world in which we live, and you will certainly encounter him in his Church and in your quiet times of prayer. But a pilgrimage really is a privileged time, a special gift of grace, when the Lord intends, if you are ready to let him, to begin to shape you powerfully into the person he is calling you to be, the person you are made to be. To each of you then I want to say, "Be ready, be open, and expect to be surprised by the way in which God will be at work in your life over the next few weeks."



May God bless you all as you prepare for this great adventure. May God bless all those who through their generosity have made this adventure possible. And may God bless and renew his Church through the faith and the joy you will bring back to us as the fruit of World Youth Day and as the precious gift you will be able to share with us.