



2016 World Youth Day Reflection

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

Krakow, Poland
Thursday 28 July, 2016

Hi Everybody, I'm Archbishop Tim Costelloe from Perth, Archbishop of Perth in Western Australia. We've just had a wonderful catechesis here – I'm afraid I can't pronounce the name of the parish or the suburb, my Polish is not very good, it's about half an hour from Krakow, and we've had a brilliant session this morning, with some beautiful prayers, some beautiful reflections and then a catechesis on the theme, let yourself be touched by God's mercy. We had pilgrims from all sorts of places, from Canada, from the United States, from the Philippines, Scotland, Holland, and I think even a couple from Australia as well, it was fantastic.

When you reflect on the theme, let yourself be touched by God's mercy, I think the corollary to that, is we have to allow God to touch others through us with His mercy, and I guess that's what I was trying to get at. We need to allow the Lord to develop in our hearts the same sensitivity to people that He had, because I reflected on some Gospel stories, and in each of those stories, Jesus entered into the personal situation of the person He encountered and understood where that person was at, and was able to offer mercy in a way that the person both needed and could understand.

I hope that's the message that got through, because it's one thing to love people and be merciful to people, but I think the key is that they have to know that they're loved, they have to know that they're experiencing mercy, and to do that, we need to have find ways to do that that speak to them very clearly.

This is my third World Youth Day: I was in Sydney, when I'd just become a bishop. I also went to Rio three years ago, and here I am in Poland. The days of the World Youth Day in Poland are obviously fantastic, and full of so many exciting things, including of course the presence of the Holy Father. But there are other things which are also part of World Youth Day. And for the bishops, I think possibly some of these other dimensions are the key parts.

I travelled through Italy, through Rome and then Turin with young people, spending our days together, having meals together, then we went to Warsaw and did days in the diocese. So again, you're spending all your time with young people, often just mucking around and having fun, other times having quite beautiful and profound conversations with individual people.

It's a real chance for a bishop to be what bishops are supposed to be, which is loving, caring shepherds to their people, and to young people in particular. And as a Salesian, following in the footsteps of St John Bosco, to be with young people is a wonderful thing for me. I hope for them too, but it certainly is for me. One of the things that strikes me, and it is a bit of a challenge in a way, is that I'm getting a bit older now, and many of the young people are sensitive to that, and they're always asking me if I need any help, or if I'm okay, or if I cough they think I'm going to drop dead from the flu or something, so there's a real sensitivity to me as a bishop, which I really



appreciate. Mercy is shown most often in the small things. Sometimes the big things, like big acts of forgiveness if we hurt someone, but mercy's also shown in the small, generous, sensitive, bighearted ways in which we deal with each other. That's been my experience of our young people – it's been wonderful.

Pope Francis is here of course – he arrived last night. People sometimes think the bishops will have very immediate access to the Pope, but to be honest, when the Pope comes to World Youth Day, he comes to meet the young people. Not that he's not interested in the bishops, but I think he realises bishops have other opportunities to be close to him, but certainly it was the case in Rio, I'm sure it will be the case here, he's going to be really interested in being with the young people. So I'll enjoy watching him relate to the young people, and watching the young people relate to him.