



DIOCESE *of* PARRAMATTA

15 July, 2016

MEDIA RELEASE

Hundreds of Western Sydney and Blue Mountains youth to meet Pope Francis

More than 300 young people from the Catholic Diocese of Parramatta are on their way to meet Pope Francis in Poland at the largest youth event in the world.

On pilgrimage to World Youth Day 2016 starting July 20, in Krakow, Poland the youth are Catholic school students and young adults from Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains. They will join in the week-long festivities along with thousands of pilgrims from across Australia.

The events will culminate with pilgrims walking more than 14km to the outskirts of Krakow for an overnight vigil and sleep out before the Papal Mass on 31 July that is expected to draw millions from around the globe.

Director of Catholic Youth Parramatta and tour leader, Mr James Camden, said the experience would have a profound impact on everyone who attends.

“The Diocese has spent several years preparing for this journey, encompassing everything from ensuring best practices for the pilgrims’ safety, to learning the songs for World Youth Day,” James said.

“We are encouraging the young people to spend less time on their mobile phones so they can experience the moment and, hopefully, have a life-changing encounter.”

Prior to arriving in Poland, the majority of pilgrims will visit the Philippines where they will take part in a week-long ‘mission-immersion’ experience, working in areas affected by the 2013 Bohol earthquake. More than \$100,000 has been raised by the Diocese of Parramatta to directly assist with school rebuilding and other humanitarian projects on the island.

Julia Hoban, a pilgrim from North Rocks, attended the previous World Youth Day in Rio in 2013 and will join the 2016 group from Parramatta. Julia said she was looking forward to experiencing the event again.

“When you see the millions of faces of young people surrounding you, you realise you’re not alone in your faith,” Julie said.

In addition to visiting religious and cultural sites of significance in Poland, pilgrims will visit the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camps en route to Krakow. Pope Francis will also visit the camps.

The pilgrims will be accompanied by the prayerful support of the whole Diocese during their pilgrimage.



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For more information:

- Commencing on 16 July, daily coverage of the journey will be provided at: parrawyd.org
- Photos are available for use (please credit Diocese of Parramatta):
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/parracatholic/collections/72157670083657801/>
- Media comment, including live radio and Skype crosses, will be available in the Philippines from 16-21 July and in Poland from 25-31 July.

**Media inquiries - Joseph Younes, Director of Communications, (02) 8838 3435, 0416 619 500,
JYounes@parra.catholic.org.au**

About the Diocese of Parramatta

The Diocese of Parramatta is the Catholic Church in Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains.

It spans one of the fastest-growing areas of Australia, incorporating the greater Western Sydney area from Parramatta to Blackheath and from Richmond to Warragamba. It is home to 330,000 Catholics in an area of 1,050,000 people.

The Diocese hosts 47 parishes and churches, educates more than 45,000 students across its 83 schools, employs more than 5,000 staff and cares for thousands of people in need through its social services arm, CatholicCare Social Services.

The Diocese of Parramatta is the fifth-largest Catholic Diocese in Australia.