

## OVER 145 UGANDAN YOUTH PARTICIPATE IN THE 2016 WORLD YOUTH DAY IN POLAND

By Jacinta W. Odongo, Media Officer, Uganda Episcopal Conference



BY JACINTA W. ODONGO

Bishop Ssemogerere (centre) flags-off the Ugandan delegation for the 2016 World Youth Day celebration

**OVER** 145 Ugandan youth and their chaperons took part in the life-changing event of the World Youth Day (WYD) that was held at Blonia Park in Krakow, Poland from July 25-31, 2016.

The delegation left for Poland on Tuesday, July 19, 2016 by Ethiopian Airline shortly after the flag-off ceremony at the Uganda Catholic Secretariat by the Bishop Chairman of the Lay Apostolate Commission, Rt. Rev Paul Ssemogerere. The delegation comprised of representatives from the Uganda Episcopal Conference (UEC) and groups from the dioceses of Arua, Nebbi, Gulu, Lira, Kampala, Kiyinda-Mityana, Masaka, Kampala, Jinja, Lugazi, Tororo, Fortportal, Hoima, Mbarara and Kabale. Another group from the Neo-catechumenal Way travelled independently.

During the flag-off, Bishop Ssemogerere urged the youth to remain united while in Poland, to use the event as a way of deepening and strengthening their faith and to socialize and net-work so as to know each other better.

"This event will help us grow in our faith and bond with each other since we will all engage in different activities like adoration, confession, the Stations of the Cross, catechesis and other activities," he said. "We need to come back and say something positive about our faith and play a positive role in our dioceses," he added.

He also cautioned the youth from disappearing after the event instead of coming back to Uganda.

The WYD event was held under the theme, **"Blessed are the Merciful, for They Shall Receive Mercy"** extracted from Matthew 5:8. The celebration attracted over 2.5 million youth from 187 countries who were accompanied by 47 cardinals, 800 bishops and 20,000 priests.

Pope Francis presided over the international WYD celebration for a second time consecutively in his Papacy. The Holy Father led the last edition in 2013 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil just a few months after his election.

In his homily at the closing Holy Mass on July 31, Pope Francis urged the youth to believe in the Power of God's Mercy to overcome obstacles that arise in one's own soul and obstacles that one will inevitably encounter in the world and in the society.

"Don't be ashamed to bring everything to the Lord in confession, especially your weaknesses, your struggles and your sins. He will surprise you with his forgiveness and his peace. Don't be afraid to say "yes" to him with all your heart, to respond generously and to follow him! Don't let your soul grow numb, but aim for the goal of a beautiful love which also demands sacrifice. Say a firm "no" to the narcotic of success at any cost and the sedative of worrying only about yourself and your own comfort," said Pope Francis.

He further reminded them of the motto for WYD and urged them not to be deterred by those who are wary of them for being dreamers. During the "Days in the Diocese" (Missionary

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### 31ST WORLD YOUTH DAY

IN  
KRAKOW, POLAND  
(JULY 27-31, 2016)



## THE EDITORIAL



**F**rom July 25 to 31, 2016, the Catholic youth from all over the world converged in Krakow, Poland for the celebration of the 31st World Youth Day. This international pilgrimage which was instituted by Saint John Paul II in 1986 is a treasure to our Church and indeed challenges us to appreciate the important place of the young people in our society. As the Holy Father Pope Francis noted in his message for the 30th World Youth Day (2015), "This pilgrimage of young people from every continent under the guidance of the Successor of Peter has truly been a providential and prophetic initiative. Together let us thank the Lord for the precious fruits which these World Youth Days have produced in the lives of countless young people in every part of the globe".

According to the Uganda National Population Census of 2014, the youths (persons 18-30 years) constituted 23% of the country's population and children below 18 years constituted 55% of the population. This means that 78% of Uganda's population is of youth and children. What a challenge for the Catholic Church in Uganda in its mission of evangelization! What a challenge for the Government of Uganda in its effort of promoting development.

As we welcome back our youth and the entire delegation that accompanied them to Poland, we are glad to share in this edition of **New Contact**, some exciting stories on the 2016 World Youth Day celebrations.

In case you need to contact us or give feedback, please call us on +256 782 746 812 or send an email to [newcontact2013@gmail.com](mailto:newcontact2013@gmail.com) or [podii2002@yahoo.com](mailto:podii2002@yahoo.com).

Let us keep in contact through **New Contact**.

Fr. Philip Odii

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## Over 145 Ugandan youth participate in the 2016 World Youth Day in Poland

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(ABOVE) Bishop Ssemogere gives his homily during the first Mass with the host families and Team Uganda in Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish in Kozlowa Gora (Piekary Slaskie, Poland). (BOTTOM LEFT) Host families and Team Uganda in a procession to one of the key sites on their first day in Poland. (BOTTOM RIGHT) Pilgrims trek after the final Holy Mass.

BY JACINTA W. ODONGO

Experience in the Diocese of Katowice) which was held from July 20-25, Team Uganda was hosted in families in an area called "Piekary Slaskie". The Ugandan delegation received a warm welcome from the local community upon arrival on July 20 at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish in Kozlowa Gora found in Piekary Slaskie. It was from this Parish that the youth were allocated the host families where they stayed for a week during the "Days in the Diocese". Team Uganda animated various Masses, para-liturgical activities, shared faith experiences and took part in concerts during the Mission Week in the Diocese of Katowice.

According to one of the Ugandan youth, Rachel Adoch from the Archdiocese of Gulu, the WYD pilgrimage left a big mark in her life.

"The greatest lesson that I learnt is that as human beings we should never underestimate the power of the Lord, because our God is always faithful. My message to the youth is that they should always believe in the power of prayer and they should always turn to Our Blessed Mother Mary because through her and Saints like St. Sr. Faustina, St. Pope John Paul II, the Lord shall grant them the peace that they desire," she said.

The National Youth Coordinator of the Uganda Episcopal Conference (UEC), Joyce Zako, who also travelled with the delegation, said the event offered a unique way to the youth to deepen their faith and grow closer to Christ, by means of prayer

and the sacraments.

After the conclusion of the "Days in the Diocese", the youth proceeded to a town called Myslowice for the WYD Week from July 25-31. During the WYD Week, a number of activities were held including a welcoming ceremony, a Friday Stations of the Cross with the Pope, catechesis, devotions and reconciliation activities, and several other activities ranging from tourism, cultural exhibitions to Christian music concerts.

The most emphasized and well known traditional theme was the unity and presence of numerous different cultures. Flags and other national declarations were displayed mainly among the youth to show their attendance at the events and proclaim their own themes of Catholic Faith. It was done through chants of the official Catholic theme song.

Meanwhile, young people walked 18 miles in total to and from one of the key sites that they visited during the WYD week. The July 30-31 vigil and Mass, on the fourth and fifth days of Pope Francis's visit, required nearly all of the participants to make the nine-mile journey to the venue, an experience that is unforgettable.

This is the second time for Poland to host the WYD celebration, the first being the WYD held in Czestochowa in 1991. As announced by Pope Francis on July 31 during the closing ceremony of the WYD in Poland, the next WYD celebration will be held in 2019 in Panama City, Panama. ■

# VOX POX: PILGRIMS SHARE THEIR WORLD YOUTH DAY EXPERIENCES AND THE LESSONS LEARNT FROM THE PILGRIMAGE

Compiled By Jacinta W. Odongo



**FR. RONNIE MUBIRU,**  
*Kampala Archdiocese*

I had an amazing experience at the World Youth Day (WYD) because of the hospitality accorded to each one of us by the Polish people, from the day we arrived until our last minute of stay. It was wonderful. The Spirit of love, prayer, togetherness, patience hovered around the sites where the events were organized. The multitudes of youth from all over the world who were drawn together to profess their faith in Jesus Christ was another good lesson. The Polish people taught us to keep, maintain and safeguard our Catholic heritage, this was more visible in the way they keep their Churches which caught everyone's eye when they visited their Churches. Pilgrims were swiftly drawn to prayers upon entering these Churches something I had never seen in my country. The whole country was involved in the WYD something we should also pick a leaf from so as to host such events successfully in future. ■



**MACKLINE AHABWE,**  
*Kampala Archdiocese*

I really had a good experience during the WYD in Poland because I got another chance to see Pope Francis for the second time. I first saw him last year when he visited Uganda. During the WYD, I was also able to attend the Holy Mass and adoration (Holy hour with the Blessed Sacrament) that was led by Pope Francis. I feel blessed having stepped in the land of Divine Mercy, where the two Saints of Krakow, St. Sr. Faustina and St. John Paul II have been recognized as special apostles of Divine Mercy. I learnt so many things in Poland which includes being merciful, prayerful and God fearing through loving, caring and sharing what we have. The Polish people were very hospitable, kind, loving, caring and they whole-heartedly shared with us the little that they had. This act of Mercy really touched me and I learnt to care, love and share with others without asking or expecting a tangible reward but, through prayers. ■



**FR. LUKE MUHINDO,**  
**CSC**

I participated in this year's WYD for the first time. I represented my Apostolate as the Director of Vocations for my Community of Holy Cross Congregation in East Africa. My Poland experience indeed was so enriching because I met and interacted with youths from all corners of the world and I was certainly besieged with joy for the future of our Mother Church. I also took part in the WYD because of the testimonies from some of our Holy Cross Seminarians in the USA who discovered their vocations from attending the WYD. As Director of Vocations, WYD is a promotion and a breeding place for vocations in the Church. Poland to me indeed became "the mountain of the Lord that all the tribes go to": (Ps 122:3-5). Whenever I look at the youths in the Church, I am always filled with confidence for the future Church. ■



**RACHAEL ADOCH,**  
*Gulu Archdiocese*

The warm welcome that we received upon our arrival in Krakow airport gave me reassurance that I was in for a very wonderful experience in Poland. The nice and tasty food, the serene weather, the comfort of sitting in buses and trains without the fear of being banged into a pothole, the loving and honest Polish men and women, meeting thousands of pilgrims and the art of prayer made my experience in Poland very wonderful and unforgettable. The Polish people showed us too much love despite the fact that they didn't know us and they proved to us that we are all one. The night vigil with the Holy Father Pope Francis was so amazing and spiritual as it was full of jubilation, songs, dances and prayer. My greatest cultural and religious shock was the strength with which the Polish people believe in the power of the Lord to the extent that when you enter any church in Poland you immediately feel the presence of God even without saying a word.

I once thought in Uganda people pray a lot but when I visited Poland that thought was totally changed. As the saying goes where there's happiness, sadness always

finds a way in. My worst experience was when some of my colleagues became sick but of course they were healed by the good Lord. ■



**MARGARET NAKANWAGI,**  
*Kampala Archdiocese*

The 2016 WYD was a great experience in my life, in fact it changed my personal life in many ways. First it strengthened my faith to a great extent and I learnt to appreciate, love and care for people in a different way. I was also impressed by the country itself because of the many years it has lived since 966 (1050 years) and that the majority of the population that is 99 percent are devoted Catholics. The love that was exhibited by the Polish people was exceptional; our host families were so loving, caring and kind to us as well as very God-fearing and time conscious about Church activities.

Visiting the Divine Mercy Sanctuary where the message of Divine Mercy was revealed to St. Sr. Faustina, seeing the Pope for the second time, and visiting the birth place of St. Pope John Paul II was my best experience. ■



**KENNETH KIMERA,**  
*Kampala Archdiocese*

I enjoyed my trip to Poland because what I saw during the two-week pilgrimage was beyond my expectation. I liked the way the Polish people welcomed us at the host Parish and in their homes from the first time that we arrived. They welcomed us with love and joy as if they knew us for a long time yet we were just meeting for the first time. The host families took very good care of us; they fed us well, showered us with wonderful gifts and taught us how to be obedient to God as well as to be time conscious. Before the Holy Mass they would always come to our rooms and remind us about time keeping, they have a strong faith towards God something which inspired me a lot. They are very devoted to their Catholic religion. I was also inspired by the catechesis especially from the touching testimonies given by the pilgrims from different countries. The homilies of Pope Francis were also very

# Vox Pox: Pilgrims share their World Youth Day experiences and the lessons learnt from the pilgrimage

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inspiring and encouraging, he advised us the youth to follow our dreams wholeheartedly with prayers and seek advice from our elders since they have a lot of experience. ■



**FR. RAPHAEL DDUMBA, Kiyinda Mityana**

WYD is a special event that usually brings together people of different walks of life including youth and elderly to experience the love of Jesus Christ. Thanks to the Holy Father, St. Pope John Paul II for initiating the WYD day. The 2016 WYD was very special to me because of the good experience that I had in Poland.

The Polish families welcomed us warmly, showed us immense love and care and shared with us everything that they had, yet they were just meeting us for the first time. This experience humbled me and taught me to be merciful and generous to people without any expectation. Through the WYD I also learnt to appreciate other people's culture because we are equal before the eyes of the Lord and nobody is perfect. ■

**PATRICIA WENENE, Kampala Archdiocese**  
My experience in Poland during the WYD was so incredible. First, I was moved by the great faith that the Polish people have towards God and the way they are strongly united as a family and community. They have a very strong bond

in their communities something that I have never seen anywhere before. Second, I was inspired by the great love, care and kindness that the host families showed us during the Days in the Diocese.

I also enjoyed our visit to the Holy places but what really caught my attention was our visit to the Divine Mercy Sanctuary before our departure to Uganda. I enjoyed the WYD and I would love to have another chance again in 2019. ■



## PAST WORLD YOUTH DAY (WYD) CELEBRATIONS

YEAR AND LOCATION	THEME
1986- Rome, Italy	Always be prepared to make a defense to anyone who calls you to account for the hope that is in you. - <b>1Pt 3:15</b>
1987- Buenos Aires, Argentina	We ourselves have known and put our faith in God's love towards ourselves. - <b>1Jn 4:16</b>
1989- Santiago de Compostela, Spain	I am the way, the truth, and the life - <b>Jn 14:6</b>
1991- Czesochowa, Poland	You have received a spirit of sonship. - <b>Romans 8:15</b>
1993- Denver, USA	I came that they might have life, and have it to the full. - <b>Jn 10:10</b>
1995- Manila, Philippines	As the Father sent me, so am I sending you. - <b>Jn 20:21</b>
1997- Paris, France	Teacher, where are you staying? Come and see. - <b>Jn 1:38-39</b>
2000- Rome, Italy	Jubilee - The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. - <b>Jn 1:14</b>
2002-Toronto, Canada	You are the salt of the earth; You are the light of the world. - <b>Mt 5:13-14</b>
2005- Cologne, Germany	We have come to worship him. - <b>Mt 2:2</b>
2008- Sydney, Australia	You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses - <b>Acts 1, 8</b>
2011- Madrid, Spain	Rooted and built up in Jesus Christ, Firm in the Faith - <b>Col 2:7</b>
2013- Rio de Janeiro, Brazil	Go and Make Disciples of All Nations - <b>Mt 28:19</b>
2016- Krakow, Poland	Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy - <b>Mt 5:7</b>

## WISE QUOTES FOR REFLECTION

*'Failure is part of life. If you don't fail, you don't learn. If you don't learn you will never change,'*  
- **Zig Ziglar**

*'Don't wait until you have reached your goal to be proud of yourself. Be proud of your every step you take toward reaching that goal,'*  
- **Carrie Wilkerson**

*'Life is not about how fast you run or how high you climb, but how well you bounce,'*  
- **Vivian Komori**

*'One of the hardest decisions you will ever face in life is choosing whether to walk away or try harder,'*  
- **Zig Ziglar**

*'Anyone who stops learning is old, whether at twenty or eighty. Anyone who keeps learning stays young. The greatest thing in life is to keep your mind young,'*  
- **Henry Ford**

*'My mission in life is not merely to survive, but to thrive and to do so with some passion, some compassion, some humor and some style,'*  
- **Maya Angelou**

*'Never blame anyone in your life. Good people give you happiness. Bad people give you experience. Worst people give you a lesson. And best people give you memories,'*  
- **Billy Cox**

*Believe in yourself so strongly that the world can't help but to believe in you too,'*  
- **Anonymous**

# PICTORIAL: 2016 WORLD YOUTH DAY CELEBRATIONS IN KRAKOW, POLAND



Team Uganda with Host Families during the Holy Mass at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish



Bishop Ssemogerere blesses some of the children of the Host families in Kozłowa Góra, Piekary Śląskie



Bishop Ssemogerere (wearing a Mitre), Fr. Walerian Tront (on his left), also the Parish Priest Our Lady of Perpetual Help, and the priests from Uganda, pose for a group photo.



Youth pilgrims brave the rain as they walk to one of the key sites in Poland



Bishop Ssemogerere (Center), Fr. Walerian (extreme left), his translator Michal Dudek (squatting) and Team Uganda pose for a group photo in Wadowice.



His Eminence Wilfrid Cardinal Napier from South Africa poses for a group photo with Team Uganda



Team Uganda perform a traditional dance at a live concert in Katowice Diocese.



Steven Curtis Chapman, an international gospel artist, performs at the concert in Katowice Diocese.



A cross section of the youth from different countries at the concert in Katowice.



Priests hearing confession from some of the youth.



The youth during Catechises with His Eminence Wilfrid Cardinal Napier from South Africa



One of the youth, from USA, who suffers from cancer, gives his testimony during Catechises (LEFT). Cardinal Napier embraces a Ugandan pilgrim after giving her testimony.



Pope Francis (in his Popemobile) arrives for the final Holy Mass in Krakow, Poland.



Bishops during the procession for the final Holy Mass in Krakow.



A cross section of the youth during the Holy Mass.



A Priest leads the youth in Adoration.



Some of the miraculous deeds that the faithful have received through the Intercession of Our Lady Queen of Poland (Black Madonna) in the Jasna Góra Sanctuary.



The Cassock which St. Pope John Paul II wore during his attempted murder in 1981, on display in the Church at the Sanctuary of St. John Paul II. (RIGHT) Host families bid farewell to Team Uganda.

# KEY SITES IN POLAND THAT THE UGANDAN DELEGATION VISITED

Compiled by Jacinta W. Odongo

## DIVINE MERCY SANCTUARY IN LAGIEWNIKI

PHOTOS BY JACINTA W. ODONGO



*The outside view of the Sanctuary.*

**THE** capital of Divine Mercy devotion is the place where St. Sr. Faustina from the convent of the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy lived and died. Her remains are buried here. The Covent was built in the second half of the 19th century. It was consecrated in 1891.

Later, it was dedicated to St. Joseph and later became the centre of Divine Mercy devotion. After 100 years, it became a sanctuary. The sanctuary resembles an arc and has two levels; the upper and lower basilica. There is a large stone altar in the presbytery with a tabernacle shaped like Earth behind. The tabernacle is surrounded by a sculpture of a shrub's branches and a large image of merciful Jesus, Jesus I trust in You hangs above it. Pictures of the apostles of Divine Mercy, St. Sr. Faustina and St. Pope John Paul II hangs to the left and right of the image.



*The inside view of the Sanctuary.*

The sanctuary is a religious centre which develops dynamically and attracts millions of pilgrims from all over the world. St. Pope John Paul II visited the Sanctuary twice in 1997 and 2002 whereas Benedict XVI in 2006. ■

## ST. JOHN PAUL II SANCTUARY

The Sanctuary is located in the so called White Seas a hill neighbouring the Shrine of the Divine Mercy. It is the site quarry of the Solvay chemical company where Karol Wojtya worked during the Nazi occupation from 1940 until 1944.

The sanctuary was built recently,

Cardinal Stanislaw Dzwisz established it on June 11, 2011, two months after the beatification of St. Pope John Paul II. It usually attracts millions of pilgrims. The chief magnet for them is an octagonal basement shrine to John Paul II known as the "lower church" of the sanctuary or the Church of the Relics (Kosciol Relikwi).



*The outside view of the St. John Paul II Sanctuary.*

The centerpiece of the shrine is a rather simple marble altar in the middle that contains a phial with the relic of the blood of St. Pope John Paul II displayed in a glass case.



*Inside the Sanctuary, there is a display of some of the items St. John Paul II used during his Papacy.*

## JASNA GORA



*The outside view of the Monastery.*

This is the name of the historic monastery that towers over Czestochowa, the heart of which is the Sanctuary of Our Lady Queen of Poland. For more than six centuries, the miraculous image of Our Lady with the child Jesus has been worshipped here.



*A portrait of Our Lady Queen of Poland (Black Madonna).*

In the 20th century, Our Lady of Jasna Gora came to be called the Black Madonna due to the dark shade of the face of the Mother of God in the image. St. Pope John Paul II repeatedly came to Jasna Gora as a young man, priest, bishop, cardinal, and then as Pope. In 1991, he selected Czestochowa as the site for the VI World Youth Day and entrusted the youth to the Jasna Gora mother of the church. ■

## WADOWICE



*The outside view of the Church in Wadowice.*

Wadowice is a small town located approximately 45 Km southwest of Krakow. It was here that Karol Wojtyla (St. Pope John Paul II) was born and spent 18 years of his life. Many people come to Wadowice to see the places that were close to him, especially the parish church of the presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, in which Karol was baptized, and received his first communion and confirmation. As Pope John Paul II, he raised the Church to the rank of a minor basilica. This town also features the Primary and secondary schools where the future Pope received his education.

## Key sites in Poland that the Ugandan delegation visited

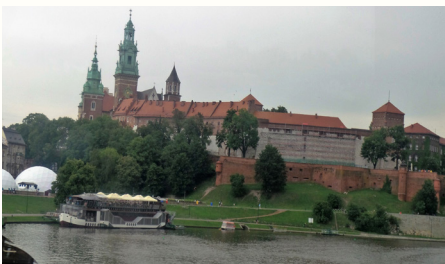
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The most important place in Wadowice, however, is the Family Home of St Pope John Paul II, located at ul. Koscielna 8, where, on May 18, 1920 at exactly 6pm the future Pope was born. Today it houses a museum dedicated to the life, activities and teachings of the papal saint, visited every year by nearly a quarter of a million people from across the world.



The kitchen window where St. John Paul II was born.

### THE WAWEL CASTLE



A landscape view of the Castle.

The Wawel Castle is a castle residency built at the command of King Casimir III the Great, who reigned from 1333 to 1370, and consists of a number of structures situated around the central courtyard.

The Wawel Royal Castle and the Wawel Hill constitute the most historically and culturally important site in Poland including a church, St. Leonard Crypt and a parish house among others. For centuries the residence of the kings of Poland and the symbol of Polish statehood, the Castle is now one of the country's premier art museums. Established in 1930, the museum's holdings in oriental art include the largest collection of Ottoman tents in Europe.



Pilgrims walk to the Castle.

### AUSCHWITZ CONCENTRATION CAMP



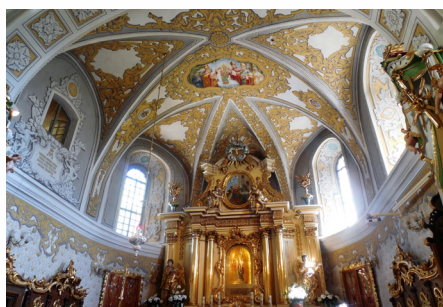
Outside view of Auschwitz Camp.

For the world, Auschwitz is a symbol of terror, genocide and the Holocaust. The camp was constructed by the Germans in 1940 to hold Polish political prisoners, who began to arrive in May the same year. It is located on the outskirts of the city of Oswiecim, which like other Polish territories, was occupied by the German Third Reich during World War II.

The first extermination of prisoners took place in September 1941, and Auschwitz II-Birkenau went on to become a major site of the Nazi Final Solution to the Jewish Question. Initially, Poles were imprisoned and died in the camp. It later also included Soviet prisoners of war, Roma and prisoners of other nationalities. From 1942, the camp became the site of the largest mass murder in the history of humanity, perpetrated against European Jews under the German plan of total extermination of that nation. The majority of Jews deported to Auschwitz including men, women and children were sent to their deaths in the gas chambers of Birkenau immediately upon arrival.

At least 1.1 million prisoners died at Auschwitz, around 90 percent of them Jewish Others deported to Auschwitz included Poles, Roma, Soviet prisoners and tens of thousands of others of diverse nationalities. Many of those not killed in the gas chambers died of starvation, forced labor, infectious diseases, individual executions, and medical experiments.

### SANCTUARY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, PATRONESS OF FAMILIES



Inside the Sanctuary.

The Sanctuary of the Blessed Virgin Mary,

Patroness of Families, is an important pilgrimage center from Krakow and Silesia to Jasna Gora. It is a special place of prayer and encounter with the Mother of God. It consists of the Church of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the field altar, the chapel above the source of the monastery, the bell tower, a pilgrim house. Nave church with narrow, semicircular chancel was rebuilt several times. The oldest part built in 1559 is a Gothic-Renaissance style.

According to a very ancient tradition the Blessed Virgin Mary is closely connected with Our Lady Queen of Poland (Jasna Gora) in Czestochowa. Returning from Russia in 1382 Silesian Duke Ladislaus of Opole, unsuccessfully looked for water in the area today Leśniów, he offered a humble prayer to the Mother of God and received the extraordinary favor, because suddenly abundant spring burst forth, giving rise to the existence of today torrent Leśniówka. In gratitude he left the chapel p source of a wooden statue of Our Lady, which was bringing together the Miraculous Icon of the "Black Madonna". The Gothic statue, 70 cm high, is today in the main altar of the sanctuary and is the subject of a living worship.



Pilgrims draw water from the Spring at the Sanctuary of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

In 1559 Castellan Auschwitz Jan Koryciński in gratitude for the many graces built him a church. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, Leśniów new owner - Joseph Męciński, reconstructed the existing church. In August 13, 1967, the ceremony of coronation of the statue of Our Lady led by the Polish Primate including Cardinal. Stefan Wyszyński, Cardinal. Karol Wojtyła (St. Pope John Paul II), and Bishop Stefan Barela took place. Since the beginning of the presence of the figure in Leśniowie growing devotion to Our Lady, venerated especially as the Patron of Families. Many pilgrims who visit this sanctuary have received graces of healing (both physical and spiritual). ■

## KABALE DIOCESE **MOURNS** THE DEATH OF EMERITUS BISHOP GAY

By Jacinta W. Odongo



FILE PHOTO

The late Rt. Rev. Robert Mary Gay, Bishop Emeritus of Kabale

Bishop Gay, who died at the age of 89, is the second Bishop Emeritus from Kabale Diocese to die this year after Bishop Barnabas Rugwizangonga Halem'Imana.

**ON JUNE 29,** 2016 the Diocese of Kabale woke up to the devastating news of the death of its third Bishop Emeritus, Rt. Rev. Robert Mary Gay.

The Secretary General of the Uganda Episcopal Conference (UEC), Msgr. John Baptist Kauta on Monday July 4, during the Weekly Mass at the Catholic Secretariat announced that Bishop Gay passed on in his home country in Canada.

"It is with great sadness that we announce the death of Rt. Rev. Robert Mary Gay, who passed on in his home country. He was committed to the people he served in Kabale. May his soul rest in peace," Msgr. Kauta said.

Bishop Gay was ordained as a priest of the Congregation of the Missionaries of Africa on January 30, 1954. He also served as the Superior General of the Missionaries of Africa (White Fathers) from 1980- 1986.

On July 15, 1994, Bishop Gay was appointed as the Apostolic Administrator

of Kabale Diocese after the retirement of the late Bishop Halem'Imana, who also passed on January 3, 2016.

He was appointed Bishop of Kabale on January 11, 1996 by Pope John Paul II and two months later, on March 9, he was ordained Bishop and installed as the third bishop of Kabale. He retired in 2003, but remained involved in church life assisting the priests in Uganda for renewal courses and retreats at St. Augustine's Institute, Kampala which belongs to the UEC.

Bishop Gay was succeeded by the current Bishop, Rt. Rev. Callist Rubaramira. He will be remembered for bringing peace and sanity by reconciling and uniting the clergy and Christians in Kabale Diocese during his tenure. ■

## APOSTOLIC NUNCIO TO UGANDA **VISITS** LUGAZI DIOCESE

By Annet Nantale - Diocese of Lugazi, Communications Office



BY ANNET NANTALE

H.E. Archbishop Michael August Blume is welcomed by Rt. Rev. Christopher Kakooza, Bishop of Lugazi Diocese.

**THE APOSTOLIC NUNCIO** to Uganda His Excellency Archbishop Michael August Blume visited the Diocese of Lugazi from June 23 to 26, 2016 for a pastoral mission.

The Nuncio was warmly welcomed by the Bishop of Lugazi, Rt. Rev. Christopher Kakooza, Bishop Emeritus Matthias Ssekamanya, the Vicar General, Msgr. Richard Kayondo, several priests and Christians amid cheers at the border sub-parish of Kiwanga Church (Namilyango Parish).

In his speech, during a reception, the Nuncio thanked the Christians for the warm welcome and hailed them for the

wonderful work that they are doing in their community.

He said that his pastoral visit is meant to fulfill his duty as a "servant of the unity of the church", by doing whatever can contribute to peace and the unity of all people. He also called upon the faithful to be "missionary disciples".

"Each one of us is called to be a Missionary disciple, and take the Gospel

to all Nations where Jesus' mercy needs to be felt," he said.

During his four-day pastoral visit, the Nuncio held meetings with the schools in Lugazi diocese at Namilyango College, with Christians at Bulimu (the pilgrimage site of the Diocesan Saint, Pontian Ngondwe) and at the Cathedral respectively.

While at Bulimu, the Nuncio urged the Christians of Naggalama and Kayunga Deaneries to always fight for the truth by accepting to carry their cross as Jesus Christ commanded them.

In his homily he noted that though St. Pontian was falsely executed by King Mwanga he did not "take the easy way of denying Christ".

He said that St. Pontian lived with the same hope as St. Paul. They both believed that God is faithful and merciful to those who are faithful to him. He explained that St. Pontian was a military man, a musician and a servant of the king but more deeply he was a baptized catholic and he found no contradiction between his faith and his professional service. This enabled him to receive eternal life which God had saved for him.

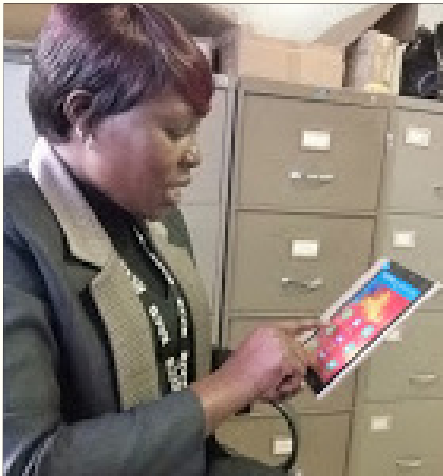
The Nuncio also emphasised that during baptism Christians receive the gift of the Holy Spirit; therefore they should fight hard to keep the flame burning by emulating St. Pontian. ■



# AMECEA SOCIAL COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT **ACQUIRES TABLETS** FOR ONLINE CORRESPONDENTS IN THE AMECEA REGION

By AMECEA Online News Correspondent

INTERNET PHOTOS



Ms. Rose Achiego AMECEA Online News Correspondent from Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops. She is one of the beneficiaries of the tablets. (Right) The Tablet as in a close-up photo.

**ON JULY 8, 2016** in a move that is meant to improve the services of AMECEA Online News Correspondents from AMECEA Countries, the Social Communications Department has bought tablets for its national correspondents in order to enhance the communication between the conferences and the AMECEA office.

"This is the first time we are giving a working gadget to our national correspondents having experienced communication difficulties in the past whenever we needed more clarifications on the news items they sent to the AMECEA Online news Office," Fr. Chrisantus Ndaga, Coordinator of AMECEA Social

Communications Department said.

"Over the time we have realized that the online news has become very instrumental and popular within the region and beyond as it offers us a platform to share with the rest of the world information from AMECEA Countries," Fr. Ndaga explained adding that the Tablets will go a long way in improving news reporting because one is able to take photos on location, do a quick news write up on the event and send to AMECEA Online News via email, or other social media channels. The system is quick, handy, efficient and cost effective as it enables cheaper communications via the social media.

"As it is now, the new information technology is the trend and we as the Church in AMECEA Region do not want to be left behind. Already we have established a vibrant ICT coordination office at AMECEA Secretariat in Nairobi, Kenya and we hope to make the effort trickle down to the AMECEA National Conferences," Fr. Ndaga said.

The AMECEA Online News Correspondents who will benefit from the tablets include Prince Henderson from Episcopal Conference of Malawi (ECM), Mwenya Mukuka from Zambia Episcopal Conference (ZEC), Jacinta Odongo from Uganda Episcopal Conference (UEC), Rose Achiego from Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops (KCCB), Sara Pelaji and Pascal Mwananche both from Tanzania Episcopal Conference (TEC), Pamela Adinda and Bernard Mberere from (AMECEA Online News)

Fr Ndaga clarified that the tablets must be taken as an office gadget similar to any other communication equipment found in the national conference communication office. "It is our wish that our correspondents get more equipment in order to facilitate their duties, enhance and make them easy," he said.

The AMECEA Online News Bulletin was established on June 5th 2013, and so far over 145 issues have been published. ■

# AMECEA SECRETARIAT **WELCOMES** NEW PASTORAL COORDINATOR

By AMECEA Online News Correspondent

INTERNET PHOTOS



Rev. Fr. Emmanuel Chimombo, the New Coordinator for AMECEA Pastoral Department

**THE SECRETARY GENERAL** of AMECEA Rev. Fr. Ferdinand Lugonzo on behalf of AMECEA Secretariat staff on July 1, 2016 welcomed the New Coordinator for AMECEA Pastoral

Department Rev. Fr. Emmanuel Chimombo to the AMECEA Secretariat Family.

While introducing Fr. Chimombo to the secretariat staff, Fr. Lugonzo expressed his joy of having a new member in the family.

"On behalf of the AMECEA secretariat, I take this opportunity to welcome Rev. Fr. Chimombo to the Secretariat and wish him God's blessings as he takes up his new position as Pastoral Coordinator while assuring him maximum collaboration and prayers for the success of the vision and mission of AMECEA," Fr. Lugonzo said.

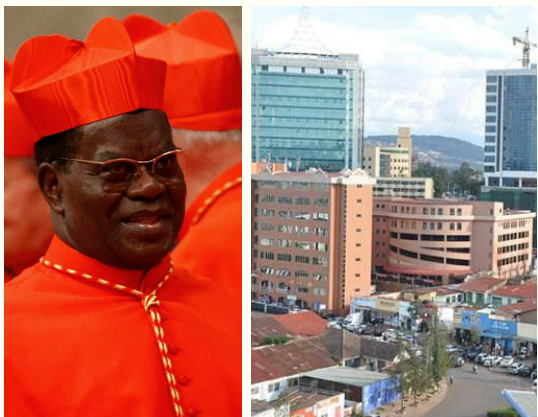
He expressed his gratitude to God for enabling Fr. Chimombo to travel safely

to Nairobi, Kenya on Monday, July 27. At the same time Fr. Lugonzo also expressed his gratitude to the Episcopal Conference of Malawi (ECM) for their fraternity that made them release Fr. Chimombo from National duties as Pastoral secretary to come and work for AMECEA.

Fr. Chimombo hails from Mayaka Parish in the Diocese of Zomba, Malawi. He was ordained a priest on 31st July 1999 and until his appointment, he was serving as the National Pastoral Coordinator and Deputy Secretary General of ECM. ■

# AFRICA TO BE CONSECRATED TO THE DIVINE MERCY

Vatican Radio



(LEFT) Cardinal Pasinya Laurent Monsengwo, the Archbishop of Kinshasa (DRC). (RIGHT) Kigali the capital of Rwanda

**THE HOLY FATHER**, Pope Francis on Monday July 11, 2016 appointed Cardinal Pasinya Laurent Monsengwo, the Archbishop of Kinshasa (DRC), as his special envoy to the Third Congress for Africa and Madagascar on Divine Mercy (AMACOM), which will be held in Kigali (Rwanda) from September 9 to 15 September, 2016.

Speaking about the Apostolic Congress on Mercy, Father Stanislas Filipek, the AMACOM Coordinator says the Congress has a continental scope to offer inner healing and reconciliation rooted in mercy.

"We are currently living a Jubilee Year

of Mercy. A Congress, which has a continental scope, on Divine Mercy to be held in Rwanda in September, is to be considered as one of the pastoral events of the Universal Church of the extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy," Fr. Filipek said.

The Congress, through its general theme, *'Divine Mercy source of hope for the New Evangelization in Africa'* is expected to attract men and women of Africa in the evil that hurts them, often causing hatred and offer them a process of inner healing and reconciliation rooted in mercy through their own experience of the Divine mercy.

"We hope that this Congress offers participants a time of prayer and encounter with the merciful Lord; a time of reflection and deepening of faith in God, rich in mercy, but also an opportunity to be in fellowship in their diversity," he added.

Fr. Filipek also said that during the Apostolic Congress on Mercy two special events will be key.

"During the Congress, two special events will be observed: The act of consecration of the African continent to the Divine Mercy slated for September

14 at the closing of the Congress and the pilgrimage of all participants at the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Sorrows in Kibeho on September 15," the AMACOM coordinator explained.

Rwanda says it is ready to welcome pilgrims to the Congress that will be held at the Sanctuary of Divine Mercy in Kabuga in the Archdiocese of Kigali, Rwanda. ■

Association of Catholic Communication Practitioners in Uganda

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## MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS FOR THE THIRTY-FIRST WORLD YOUTH DAY, 2016

From the Vatican, 15 August 2015 - Solemnity of the Assumption of the B.V. Mary

**"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy" (Mt 5:7)**

Dear Young People,

We have come to the last stretch of our pilgrimage to Krakow, the place where we will celebrate the 31st World Youth Day next year in the month of July. We are being guided on this long and challenging path by Jesus' words taken from the Sermon on the Mount. We began this journey in 2014 by meditating together on the first Beatitude: **"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 5:3)**. The theme for 2015 was: **"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Mt 5:8)**. During the year ahead, let us allow ourselves to be inspired by the words: **"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy" (Mt 5:7)**.

### 1. THE JUBILEE OF MERCY

With this theme, the Krakow 2016 WYD forms part of the Holy Year of Mercy and so becomes a Youth Jubilee at world level. It is not the first time that an international youth gathering has coincided with a Jubilee Year. Indeed, it was during the Holy Year of the Redemption (1983/1984) that Saint John Paul II first called on young people from around the world to come together on Palm Sunday. Then, during the Great Jubilee of the year 2000, over two million young people from around 165 countries gathered in Rome for the 15th World Youth Day. I am sure that the Youth Jubilee in Krakow will be, as on those two previous occasions, one of the high points of this Holy Year!

Perhaps some of you are asking: **what is this Jubilee Year that is celebrated in the Church?** The scriptural text of

Leviticus 5 can help us to understand the meaning of a "jubilee" for the people of Israel. Every fifty years they heard the sounding of a trumpet (jobel) calling them (jobil) to celebrate a holy year as a time of reconciliation (jobal) for everyone. During that time they had to renew their good relations with God, with their neighbours and with creation, all in a spirit of gratuitousness. This fostered, among other things, debt forgiveness, special help for those who had fallen into poverty, an improvement in interpersonal relations and the freeing of slaves.

Jesus Christ came to proclaim and bring about the Lord's everlasting time of grace. He brought good news to the poor, freedom to prisoners, sight to the blind and freedom to the oppressed (cf. Lk 4:18-19). In Jesus, and particularly in his Paschal Mystery, the deeper meaning

# Message of Pope Francis for the 31st World Youth Day

FROM PAGE 10

of the jubilee is fully realized. When the Church proclaims a jubilee in the name of Christ, we are all invited to experience a wonderful time of grace. The Church must offer abundant signs of God's presence and closeness, and reawaken in people's hearts the ability to look to the essentials.

In particular, this Holy Year of Mercy is "a time for the Church to rediscover the meaning of the mission entrusted to her by the Lord on the day of Easter: to be a sign and an instrument of the Father's mercy" (Homily at First Vespers of Divine Mercy Sunday, 11 April 2015).

## 2. MERCIFUL LIKE THE FATHER

The motto for this Extraordinary Jubilee is "Merciful like the Father" (cf. *Misericordiae Vultus*, 13). This fits in with the theme of the next WYD, so let us try to better understand the meaning of divine mercy. The Old Testament uses various terms when it speaks about mercy. The most meaningful of these are *hesed* and *rahamim*. The first, when applied to God, expresses God's unfailing fidelity to the Covenant with his people whom he loves and forgives for ever. The second, *rahamim*, which literally means "entrails", can be translated as "heartfelt mercy". This particularly brings to mind the maternal womb and helps us understand that God's love for his people is like that of a mother for her child. That is how it is presented by the prophet Isaiah: "Can a mother forget her infant, be without tenderness for the child of her womb? Even should she forget, I will never forget you" (Is 49:15). Love of this kind involves making space for others within ourselves and being able to sympathize, suffer and rejoice with our neighbours.

The biblical concept of mercy also includes the tangible presence of love that is faithful, freely given and able to forgive. In the following passage from Hosea, we have a beautiful example of God's love, which the prophet compares to that of a father for his child: "When Israel was a child I loved him; out of Egypt I called my son. The more I called them, the farther they went from me... Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk, who took them in my arms; I drew them with human cords, with bands of love; I fostered them like one who raises an infant to his cheeks... I stooped to feed my child" (Hos 11:1-4).

Despite the child's wrong attitude that deserves punishment, a father's love is faithful. He always forgives his repentant children. We see here how forgiveness is always included in mercy. It is "not an abstract idea, but a concrete reality with

which he reveals his love as of that of a father or a mother, moved to the very depths out of love for their child... It gushes forth from the depths naturally, full of tenderness and compassion, indulgence and mercy" (*Misericordiae Vultus*, 6).

The New Testament speaks to us of divine mercy (*eleos*) as a synthesis of the work that Jesus came to accomplish in the world in the name of the Father (cf. Mt 9:13). Our Lord's mercy can be seen especially when he bends down to human misery and shows his compassion for those in need of understanding, healing and forgiveness. Everything in Jesus speaks of mercy. Indeed, he himself is mercy.

In Chapter 15 of Luke's Gospel we find the three parables of mercy: the **lost sheep**, the **lost coin** and the **parable of the prodigal son**. In these three parables we are struck by God's joy, the joy that God feels when he finds and forgives a sinner. Yes, it is God's joy to forgive! This sums up the whole of the Gospel. "Each of us, each one of us, is that little lost lamb, the coin that was mislaid; each one of us is that son who has squandered his freedom on false idols, illusions of happiness, and has lost everything. But God does not forget us; the Father never abandons us. He is a patient Father, always waiting for us! He respects our freedom, but he remains faithful forever. And when we come back to him, he welcomes us like children into his house, for he never ceases, not for one instant, to wait for us with love. And his heart rejoices over every child who returns. He is celebrating because he is joy. God has this joy, when one of us sinners goes to him and asks his forgiveness" (*Angelus*, 15 September 2013).

God's mercy is very real and we are all called to experience it firsthand. When I was seventeen years old, it happened one day that, as I was about to go out with friends, I decided to stop into a church first. I met a priest there who inspired great confidence, and I felt the desire to open my heart in Confession. That meeting changed my life! I discovered that when we open our hearts with humility and transparency, we can contemplate God's mercy in a very concrete way. I felt certain that, in the person of that priest, God was already waiting for me even before I took the step of entering that church. We keep looking for God, but God is there before us, always looking for us, and he finds us first. Maybe one of you feels something weighing on your heart. You are thinking: I did this, I did that.... Do not be afraid! God is waiting for you! God is a Father and he is always waiting for us! It is so wonderful to feel the merciful embrace of the Father

in the sacrament of Reconciliation, to discover that the confessional is a place of mercy, and to allow ourselves to be touched by the merciful love of the Lord who always forgives us!

You, dear young man, dear young woman, have you ever felt the gaze of everlasting love upon you, a gaze that looks beyond your sins, limitations and failings, and continues to have faith in you and to look upon your life with hope? Do you realize how precious you are to God, who has given you everything out of love? Saint Paul tells us that "God proves his love for us in that, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom 5:8). Do we really understand the power of these words?

I know how much the WYD cross means to all of you. It was a gift from Saint John Paul II and has been with you at all your World Meetings since 1984. So many changes and real conversions have taken place in the lives of young people who have encountered this simple bare cross! Perhaps you have asked yourselves the question: **what is the origin of the extraordinary power of the cross?** Here is the answer: the cross is the most eloquent sign of God's mercy! It tells us that the measure of God's love for humanity is to love without measure! Through the cross we can touch God's mercy and be touched by that mercy! Here I would recall the episode of the two thieves crucified beside Jesus. One of them is arrogant and does not admit that he is a sinner. He mocks the Lord. The other acknowledges that he has done wrong; he turns to the Lord saying: "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom". Jesus looks at him with infinite mercy and replies: "Today you will be with me in Paradise" (cf. Lk 23:32, 39-43). With which of the two do we identify? Is it with the arrogant one who does not acknowledge his own mistakes? Or is it with the other, who accepts that he is in need of divine mercy and begs for it with all his heart? It is in the Lord, who gave his life for us on the cross, that we will always find that unconditional love which sees our lives as something good and always gives us the chance to start again.

## 3. THE AMAZING JOY OF BEING INSTRUMENTS OF GOD'S MERCY

The Word of God teaches us that "it is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). That is why the fifth Beatitude declares that the merciful are blessed. We know that the Lord loved us first. But we will be truly blessed and happy only when

# Message of Pope Francis for the 31st World Youth Day

FROM PAGE 11

we enter into the divine "logic" of gift and gracious love, when we discover that God has loved us infinitely in order to make us capable of loving like Him, without measure. Saint John says: *"Beloved, let us love one another, because love is of God; everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God. Whoever is without love does not know God, for God is love... In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as expiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also must love one another"* (1 Jn 4:7-11).

After this very brief summary of how the Lord bestows his mercy upon us, I would like to give you some suggestions on how we can be instruments of this mercy for others.

I think of the example of **Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati**. He said, *"Jesus pays me a visit every morning in Holy Communion, and I return the visit in the meagre way I know how, visiting the poor"*. Pier Giorgio was a young man who understood what it means to have a merciful heart that responds to those most in need. He gave them far more than material goods. He gave himself by giving his time, his words and his capacity to listen. He served the poor very quietly and unassumingly. He truly did what the Gospel tells us: *"When you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right is doing, so that your almsgiving may be secret"* (Mt 6:3-4). Imagine that, on the day before his death when he was gravely ill, he was giving directions on how his friends in need should be helped. At his funeral, his family and friends were stunned by the presence of so many poor people unknown to them. They had been befriended and helped by the young Pier Giorgio.

I always like to link the Gospel Beatitudes with Matthew 25, where Jesus presents us with the works of mercy and tells us that we will be judged on them. I ask you, then, to rediscover the **corporal works of mercy**: *to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, welcome the stranger, assist the sick, visit the imprisoned and bury the dead*. Nor should we overlook the **spiritual works of mercy**: *to counsel the doubtful, teach the ignorant, admonish sinners, comfort the sorrowful, forgive offences, patiently bear with troublesome people and pray to God for the living and the dead*. As you can see, mercy does not just imply being a "good person" nor is it mere sentimentality. It is the measure of our authenticity as disciples of Jesus, and of our credibility as

Christians in today's world.

If you want me to be very specific, I would suggest that for the first seven months of 2016 you choose a **corporal** and a **spiritual** work of mercy to practice each month. Find inspiration in the prayer of **Saint Faustina**, a humble apostle of Divine Mercy in our times:

*"Help me, O Lord,  
...that my eyes may be merciful, so that I will never be suspicious or judge by appearances, but always look for what is beautiful in my neighbours' souls and be of help to them;  
... that my ears may be merciful, so that I will be attentive to my neighbours' needs, and not indifferent to their pains and complaints;  
... that my tongue may be merciful, so that I will never speak badly of others, but have a word of comfort and forgiveness for all;  
... that my hands may be merciful and full of good deeds;  
... that my feet may be merciful, so that I will hasten to help my neighbour, despite my own fatigue and weariness;  
... that my heart may be merciful, so that I myself will share in all the sufferings of my neighbour"* (Diary, 163).

The Divine Mercy message is a very specific life plan because it involves action. One of the most obvious works of mercy, and perhaps the most difficult to put into practice, is to forgive those who have offended us, who have done us wrong or whom we consider to be enemies. *"At times how hard it seems to forgive! And yet pardon is the instrument placed into our fragile hands to attain serenity of heart. To let go of anger, wrath, violence, and revenge are necessary conditions to living joyfully"* (Misericordiae Vultus, 9).

I meet so many young people who say that they are tired of this world being so divided, with clashes between supporters of different factions and so many wars, in some of which religion is being used as justification for violence. We must ask the Lord to give us the grace to be merciful to those who do us wrong. Jesus on the cross prayed for those who had crucified him: *"Father, forgive them, they know not what they do"* (Lk 23:34). Mercy is the only way to overcome evil. Justice is necessary, very much so, but by itself it is not enough. Justice and mercy must go together. How I wish that we could join together in a chorus of prayer, from the depths of our hearts, to implore the Lord to have mercy on us and on the whole world!

#### 4. KRAKOW IS EXPECTING US!

Only a few months are left before we

meet in Poland. Krakow, the city of Saint John Paul II and Saint Faustina Kowalska, is waiting for us with open arms and hearts. I believe that Divine Providence led us to the decision to celebrate the Youth Jubilee in that city which was home to those two great apostles of mercy in our times. John Paul II realized that this is the time of mercy. At the start of his pontificate, he wrote the encyclical *Dives in Misericordia*.

In the Holy Year 2000 he canonized Sister Faustina and instituted the Feast of Divine Mercy, which now takes place on the Second Sunday of Easter. In 2002 he personally inaugurated the Divine Mercy Shrine in Krakow and entrusted the world to Divine Mercy, in the desire that this message would reach all the peoples of the earth and fill their hearts with hope: *"This spark needs to be lighted by the grace of God. This fire of mercy needs to be passed on to the world. In the mercy of God the world will find peace and mankind will find happiness!"* (Homily at the Dedication of the Divine Mercy Shrine in Krakow, 17 August 2002).

Dear young people, at the Shrine in Krakow dedicated to the merciful Jesus, where he is depicted in the image venerated by the people of God, Jesus is waiting for you. He has confidence in you and is counting on you! He has so many things to say to each of you... Do not be afraid to look into his eyes, full of infinite love for you. Open yourselves to his merciful gaze, so ready to forgive all your sins. A look from him can change your lives and heal the wounds of your souls. His eyes can quench the thirst that dwells deep in your young hearts, a thirst for love, for peace, for joy and for true happiness. Come to Him and do not be afraid! Come to him and say from the depths of your hearts: *"Jesus, I trust in You!"*. Let yourselves be touched by his boundless mercy, so that in turn you may become apostles of mercy by your actions, words and prayers in our world, wounded by selfishness, hatred and so much despair.

Carry with you the flame of Christ's merciful love – as Saint John Paul II said – in every sphere of your daily life and to the very ends of the earth. In this mission, I am with you with my encouragement and prayers. I entrust all of you to Mary, Mother of Mercy, for this last stretch of the journey of spiritual preparation for the next WYD in Krakow. I bless all of you from my heart. ■

