

DIOCESE OF ORANGE



MEDIA CONTACT
RYAN LILYENGREN
714-282-3075
RYANL@RCBO.ORG

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ORANGE COUNTY CATHOLIC YOUTH EMBARK ON EUROPEAN PILGRIMAGE FOR WORLD YOUTH DAY

ORANGE, Calif., (Aug. 9, 2005) -The Diocese of Orange has organized the largest group in its history to attend the 20th annual World Youth Day in Cologne, Germany. The Diocesan group consists of more than 90 Catholic youth. The majority of the youth come from the parishes of St. John the Baptist, St. Thomas More, St. Anthony Claret and Sts. Simon and Jude. The Diocese of Orange group is expected to join one million young people in Cologne on August 19th for the opening ceremony.

World Youth Day marks Pope Benedict XVI first papal trip outside of the Vatican since his appointment as Holy Father. The American Catholic Church contingent will be hosted by acclaimed musician Tony Melendez and singer/songwriter Steve Angrisano.

Tony Melendez, a Christian folk musician born without arms as a result of Thalidomide, a drug prescribed to his mother during her first trimester, has mastered the guitar using only his feet. Tony played his critically acclaimed song "Never be the Same" for Pope John Paul II in Los Angeles September 15, 1987. Over the past two decades Tony has served the Commission from the Pontiff, touring all 50 states and the world. Tony also has a best selling autobiography titled "the Gift of Hope."

Steve Angrisiano, a singer, songwriter and storyteller who has shared his message of hope with thousands of young people over the past 10 years, has been a staple at major youth events, both nationally and internationally, including three previous World Youth Days and four National Catholic Youth Conferences. He has dedicated much of his life to catholic youth programs and will bring a great deal to the group.

St. John the Baptist in Costa Mesa has organized the largest group. The majority of participants are from the parish school as well as the parish youth group. "We are blessed that our students and parish youth are so enthusiastic about being involved in World Youth Day. The large number participating is representative of the time and effort our World Youth Day coordinators and youth pastor have dedicated to our parish," said Rev. Martin Benzoni, St. John the Baptist pastor.

St. John the Baptist's youth have been fundraising for the pilgrimage for two years. They have conducted bake sales, car washes, raffles, and garage sales to offset the cost of the two week pilgrimage to Germany. Currently, they have raised over \$35,000 to help cover travel expenses. "Our kids have spent countless hours over the past two years fundraising to ensure that they are able to participate in this incredible opportunity. The World Youth Day program at St. John the Baptist is not confined to just the trip to Germany, these kids are involved in this Catholic youth program throughout the year," said Suzy Bunnell, World Youth Day coordinator.

The schedule for the U.S. group is a grueling weeklong pilgrimage to holy sites and tourist destinations from Krakow, Poland to Cologne, Germany. The group begins its trek across Europe August 8th upon arrival in Poland. Krakow for 500 years was the seat of the Polish Kings and is rich with historical architecture. The youth will tour the Wawel Castle and its cathedral, Cloth Hall and St. Mary's church and its magnificent altar. While in Krakow the group will visit Auschwitz, the infamous Nazi death camp. They will also visit the small town of Wadowice, Wadowice is the birthplace of the late Pope John Paul II and location of the local parish where he was baptized.

The group will also explore Prague, Czech Republic. On August 13th the group will visit the castle area of Hradcany which includes St. Vitus Cathedral, the Lesser Quarte, the Church of the Infant of Prague and Charles' Bridge. After an extensive tour of the Hradcany area the group will move down to the heart of Prague. The gothic church of St. Barbara and the renaissance jewel of the Italian court will be two of the highlights of their visit to Prague.

World Youth Day events begin on August 19th when the group arrives in Cologne, Germany. Pope Benedict XVI will mark the beginning of this historic event by performing the Stations of the Cross. The weeklong event will be marked by prayer, ceremony, educational classes and youth social events. The Diocese of Orange group will be joined by Most. Rev. Jamie Soto, Auxiliary Bishop of Orange, at the opening event. Bishop Soto is a catechist for the World Youth Day program. He will guide groups from all over the world on August 18th through a lesson titled, "Meeting Christ in the Eucharist" and again on August 19th with, "Living in the World as True Worshipers of God."

"World Youth Day is a special opportunity for the church to highlight the contributions of young Catholics and to recognize that they are not only the future of our church, but they are also a dynamic part of the Church now. We are especially proud of the large number representing the diocese. Their spiritual pilgrimage to Cologne, Germany inspires us all," said Bishop Soto.

THE MARYWOOD CENTER
2811 E. VILLA REAL DRIVE
P. O. BOX 14195
ORANGE, CALIFORNIA 92863-1595
PHONE: (714) 282-3000
FAX: (714) 282-3029