

WORLD & NATION

Teen delegates traveling to Vatican for youth day

By John Thavis
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — With the stage set for a week of World Youth Day activities in Rome, a smiling Pope John Paul II welcomed the first of an expected 1.2 million young people and told them to open their hearts to the missionary spirit.

"Christ needs souls who know how to witness to the world the radical newness of the Gospel," he told thousands of young jubilee volunteers Aug. 12.

"I ask you to open your hearts to him with generosity, so that after your stay in Rome you can return to your homes even more filled with an apostolic spirit, to be courageous missionaries of the new evangelization," he said.

The pope made the remarks to about 1,000 volunteers at his summer residence in Castel Gandolfo and to 20,000 more watching on video in St. Peter's Square.

Looking energetic and good-humored, the 80-year-old pontiff offered a light-hearted endorsement of the Italian catering firm that will provide meals for the youths during the week.

"They're making delicious meals — at least that's what they've told me," he quipped.

At his Sunday Angelus blessing the next day, the pope greeted participants as well as those who would not be attending the church's youth celebration.

"I want to express my deepest affection to every young person who joins us spiritually in the coming days, and also to those who feel distant. I say to all: God is close to you and loves you — welcome him!" he said.

Around the Vatican, workers placed wel-

coming banners and hung the flags of nations around St. Peter's Square, as the first wave of young people rolled into Rome on planes, trains and buses. A group of Italian youths took a more traditional form of transportation — their own feet — walking 370 miles from the northern city of Mantua.

Standing under a blistering sun in St. Peter's Square, about 40 U.S. students from Long Island exuded the sense of excitement and camaraderie of those arriving in Rome. A highlight of their whirlwind pilgrimage along the way, said John Graziano, was meeting young people from Chad in Assisi, Italy.

"We were dancing and singing with them in the square," he said.

Officially, World Youth Day activities were to begin with welcoming ceremonies that include Pope John Paul Aug. 15, and to culminate with a rally and Mass Aug. 19-20. But on Aug. 12, some 300 global representatives, including those from Orthodox and Protestant churches, already had begun a four-day encounter known as the International Youth Forum.

Welcoming the delegates, U.S. Cardinal J. Francis Stafford, president of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, spoke about young pilgrims of the past who can serve as models for today, including St. Francis of Assisi, St. Catherine of Siena, St. Jerome and St. Therese of Lisieux.

The young people later broke up into groups to discuss the ways in which the Christian faith brings strength to one's life, the struggles of living out faith in personal and professional life, and how the Gospel can improve the world.

Among those arriving for World Youth



Nancy Wiechec/CNS

A pilgrim from Colombia enters St. Peter's Square for the start of World Youth Day Aug. 15. Young people from 160 countries will be represented during the event.

Day activities were thousands of youths from Third World countries, including 27 nations racked by war or civil conflict. Many were able to come to Rome because of a \$3.5 million Vatican solidarity fund, officials said at a press conference Aug. 11.

Several Vatican curial officials also said they would join the pope in offering to share their own residences with visiting young people to help relieve a massive housing crunch during the Aug. 15-20 activities.

Staying at the pope's residence in Castel Gandolfo, just outside of Rome, were three youths each from Congo, Sri Lanka, Tahiti, Canada and Italy. Most young people were being housed in hotels, schools, religious institutes and private homes.

The gathering included 750 youths from the Holy Land, including Israel, Palestinian Territories and Jordan, the largest delegation from the region to have participated in such an event.

"We need to show the Christians around

the world that Christians must remain to live in the Holy Land because this is our land ... because Jesus was born here," said Rita Yousef Sa'adeh, a 28-year-old nurse departing her West Bank city of Ramallah.

But some youth delegations were blocked from attending. A group of young people from mainland China wrote a letter to the pope, calling for a united church in China and expressing disappointment that they were unable to make the trip.

"Unfortunately, yet again we Chinese young people from mainland China will not be able to share in your celebration with the young people of the universal church and of the world," read the letter, which was published by the Vatican missionary news service, Fides.

"This upsets and saddens us," they wrote.

Contributing to this story was Benedicta Cipola in Vatican City.

MISSION NEWS

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Loretta Young dies at 87; helped create TV ministry

LOS ANGELES (CNS) — Movie and TV star Loretta Young, a lifelong Catholic who died of ovarian cancer Aug. 12 in Los Angeles, was an essential part of Catholic-sponsored Family Theater Productions for 53 years, said Holy Cross Father John P. Phalen.

Young starred in Family Theater's first radio drama in 1947, hosted its three-part TV series on the mysteries of the rosary in the late 1980s, and narrated a 1998 biographical program on its founder, the late Holy Cross Father Patrick Peyton, famous for promoting the family rosary.

Father Phalen, president of Holy Cross Family Ministries in Albany, N.Y., and Family Theater Productions in Hollywood, said in a statement: "We will be forever grateful to Loretta Young for her willingness to share her talents with filmmakers and television audiences for over 70 years."

A funeral Mass for Young, who was 87, was to be celebrated Aug. 16 at her parish, St. Louis in Cathedral City, Calif.

Starring in nearly 100 films over four decades, Young won the best-actress Oscar in 1947 for her performance as a Swedish maid who runs for Congress in "The Farmer's Daughter," and was nominated in the same category for playing a nun in the 1949 film, "Come to the Stable."

In 1953, she began an eight-year run on television with two series, "A Letter to Loretta" and "The Loretta Young Show." Each show began with a star turn by Young in a designer gown and ended with her quoting from the Bible or explaining the moral of the program.

In his statement, Father Phalen said the



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Television and film star Loretta Young stands with Holy Cross Father Patrick Peyton in this 1954 photo. Young, who died Aug. 12 at age 87, was active with ministries founded by Father Peyton for more than 50 years.

influential Young befriended Father Peyton in the late 1940s and "helped him create Family Theater Productions by introducing him to other celebrities to star in the nonsectarian radio dramas he was trying to produce."

Over a 22 year-run on the Mutual Broadcasting Network, more than 400 Hollywood stars performed in Family Theater radio dramas designed to entertain, inspire and educate families. The series produced the famous slogan, "The family that prays together stays together."

Family Theater Productions honored Young with its lifetime achievement award in 1997.