

Youths urged to be new generation of builders

By John Thavis
Catholic News Service

TORONTO — Capping a week of prayer and celebration by more than 500,000 Catholic youths, Pope John Paul II urged the church's younger generations to follow Christ and transform a world torn by hatred and terrorism.

He asked them to keep loving the church and its ministers, despite the harm done to the young by a small minority of priests.

The pope's words and his presence highlighted World Youth Day ceremonies July 25-28 in Toronto, where an army of young people in T-shirts and backpacks spent the week praying, listening to homilies and making friends among their peers from

more than 170 countries.

"The aspiration that humanity nurtures, amid countless injustices and sufferings, is the hope of a new civilization marked by freedom and peace. But for such an undertaking, a new generation of builders is needed," the pope said at an evening vigil in a Toronto park July 27.

"You must be those builders," he said. "The future is in your hearts and in your hands."

At a closing Mass at the rain-dampened site the next day, the pope addressed the sex-abuse issue, saying the harm done to the young and vulnerable by some priests and religious "fills us all with a deep sense of sadness and shame."

But the vast majority of ministers only want to serve and do good, and the young

people should love and support them, he said to cheers from a crowd estimated at 800,000 people.

Describing himself as "old," the 82-year-old pontiff looked and sounded remarkably good throughout the week and proved once again that his chemistry with young people was something special. Unlike his last few trips, he pronounced his speeches in their entirety in a strong voice.

After walking down a set of stairs to the tarmac when he landed in Toronto July 23 — an unplanned gesture from the frail pope, who was supposed to ride down in a lift — the pontiff praised the "gifts of intelligence and heart" that make young people the future of humanity.

But he warned that they also were affected by conflict and injustice in the con-

temporary world.

"Too many lives begin and end without joy, without hope. That is one of the principal reasons for World Youth Day. Young people are coming together to commit themselves, in the strength of their faith in Jesus Christ, to the great cause of peace and human solidarity," he said.

"Last year we saw with dramatic clarity the tragic face of human malice. We saw what happens when hatred, sin and death take command," the pope said, referring to the Sept. 11 attacks.

"But today Jesus' voice resounds in the midst of our gathering. His is a voice of life, of hope, of forgiveness; a voice of justice and of peace. Let us listen to this voice," he said.

Contributing to this story was Carol Zimmermann.



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Drenched by the morning rains, Courtney Lucas of Mayerthorpe, Alberta, Canada, watches the Holy Father's arrival for Sunday Mass on one of many jumbotrons in Downsview Park.

Once in a lifetime

TORONTO — They sweated frequently. Got caught in massive crowds. Slept at first on floors, and later on hard ground that became mud from a fierce rainstorm. Walked miles upon miles.

Granted, some folks were carrying cell phones. But other conveniences such as cars, television and the Internet were not part of the picture.

In the end, maybe it comes down to what people will endure to be with the leader of their faith.

A group of 30 diocesan young adults braved these challenges July 22-28 at various venues around Toronto. They were joined by another gang of perhaps 1,000 people from this diocese for the weekend segment.

The event was World Youth Day, and meeting these less-than-ideal conditions



Pope John Paul II lifts the chalice during Mass at the final event of World Youth Day July 28.

might be viewed as a testament to the physical sacrifices made by WYD's founder, Pope John Paul II. The 82-year-old pontiff defied many doubters who thought he'd be unable to journey to Canada.

He must have been overjoyed at what he saw. According to official estimates, more than 500,000 people attended the pope's Saturday-evening vigil July 27, and 800,000 came out for his closing Mass the next morning.

"It was a once-in-a-lifetime experience," said Melissa Mundo, a diocesan young-adult pilgrim from Cornell Catholic Community, as the pope's Sunday liturgy wrapped up at Downsview Park.

This reporter heard many people echo Mundo's comment last week. The following

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