**AFTER THE YOUFRA INTERNATIONAL GATHERING AND WYD**

World Youth Day is over. As one who was actively involved, I breathe a sigh of relief.

Ever since September in 2005, when the Pope announced that Sydney would be the venue in 2008, I was aware, from what I knew of previous WYDs, that a benign tsunami was heading in our direction.

Before previous WYDs, the Presidency of the Secular Franciscan Order had organized a three-day international meeting of Franciscan Youth, gathered from many countries where the Franciscan Youth Movement was established. I asked the Presidency whether they intended to do so in 2008. It would depend on what I could organize in Sydney.

I corresponded with Fr Ivan Matic OFM, General Assistant to the SFO and Franciscan Youth, who referred me to Xavi Ramos, International Councillor in the Presidency for Franciscan Youth, also to Lucy Almiranez, International Councillor for Asia and Oceania, and Michele Cannone, National Leader of the Franciscan Youth in Italy.

I set my sights on St Francis School and Church, Paddington, as the ideal location for the Franciscan Youth International Gathering and WYD, so that the pilgrims could stay there from 11 to 21 July. After a long and anxious time, the WYD Administration accepted the arrangement.

Much later, the venue was enormously enhanced by the participation of the *Come In Centre*. We settled for accommodation in the school, catechesis in the church and meals in the *Come In Centre.*

Sixty Franciscan Youth pilgrims arrived for the international gathering. They came from Croatia, Slovenia, Poland, Italy, France, Vietnam, Philippines, Congo, South Africa, the United States of America, Springvale in Victoria, and St Johns Park in NSW.

The Croatians and Slovenians joined their respective national pilgrimages for WYD. The rest stayed with us a Paddington.

The Franciscan Youth Gathering, from 11 to 15 July, and the week of WYD, from 15 to 21 July at Paddington, were a resounding success.

The rapper at the Bondi Event gave out a quotable line: “There ain’t no party like a Catholic party, ‘cos a Catholic party don’t stop!” The Franciscan Youth sang their own version, “There ain’t no party like a YouFra party ‘cos a YouFra party don’t stop!”

The “YouFra party” will certainly continue with added impetus at St Johns Park and at Springvale, but will that be the only Franciscan result from WYD08?

One Croatian friar at St Johns Park in Western Sydney, not a young man but a keen Franciscan, is responsible for establishing the only Franciscan Youth Fraternity in Australia. A young Secular Franciscan is inspiring an emerging YouFra fraternity in Springvale, Victoria. Are there other friars and Secular Franciscans prepared to do the rewarding work of sharing their Franciscan charism with young people?

I met some of the thirty young people from our parish in Singapore who attended WYD. Could the Secular Franciscans and the friars take up the challenge of introducing them into the Franciscan Youth movement?

The friars at Waverley were deeply impressed by the group from Padua College, Kedron, who stayed in the friary. Could the Secular Franciscans and the friars in Brisbane propose the Franciscan Youth movement to them?

Two girls from St Clare’s College, Waverley, entertained us with a skit in the Franciscan Youth Festival at St Francis Church on 17 July. Could the Secular Franciscans and the friars and Sisters in Waverley propose the Franciscan Youth Movement to the senior girls?

What are we Franciscans prepared to do in order to ensure that the great success of Sydney’s Franciscan Youth International Meeting and World Youth Day does not evaporate in euphoria?

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