

## Sister Yvette's World Youth Day Experience



'G'Day' was the way we were greeted when we, the pilgrims from the Diocese of Patterson, New Jersey, arrived in Brisbane, Australia, for World Youth Day with our Holy Father. After 3 different flights, 22 1/2 hours of flying and hours in the airports we were excited to be in Cairns to do some sightseeing before going to Sydney for World Youth Day.

G'day mate' and 'No Worries Mate' were common everyday sayings we heard throughout our 2 weeks Down Under. We spent 4 days up in the mountains visiting the Aborigines' stores and villages, mingling and taking pictures of many animals, like the kangaroos, and koalas and visiting the great Barrier Reef. I learned that Australia has more species of animals than the U.S. and Europe combined.

**Do you know why the kangaroo and koala are the Australian national symbol?**

**Ans:** In keeping with their National Anthem of 'always advancing', the kangaroo and koala were chosen because they are the only two animals that cannot walk backward, therefore they are always moving forward.

While in Cairns we viewed the spectacular Great Barrier Reef (one of the new 'wonders' of the world). I went in the submarine to view it, but many of the young people chose scuba diving and snorkeling. On each of the reefs there are over a 100 different corals, with different shapes, sizes and shades of color. It was a 'wow' moment. I took a moment to thank God for the beauty of his creation. I have never witness such beauty under the water.



We attended Mass celebrated by the bishop of Cairns, who knew and happened to be in seminary with two of our priests from the diocese. It's a small world after all!

When we arrived in Sydney after a 3 hour flight from Cairns, we were greeted by the World Youth Day official 'greeters' and literally hundreds of young pilgrims in the airport singing, dancing, ring plays, laughing and talking and coming up to us and asking "Where are you from?" Then they would say "We are from Poland," or some would say "We are from Spain" while others would say they were from other countries. We probably met pilgrims from about 15 countries just while waiting for our luggage. We thought it was time that we take out the 4 huge American flags and hoist them on pole sticks. What excitement filled the air!!

Once World Youth Day started, we had 3 catechesis sessions. They were presented by Cardinal McCormick (Baltimore) and Bishop Thomas Collins (Canada). After each session there was question and answer sessions.



**Fr. Patrick Rice, Cardinal McCormick,  
Cecile Augustin and Sr. Yvette Fernander**

There were really touching moments to see some many young people on fire for their faith, their enthusiasm, their witnessing openly about their love for Christ, their reverence during mass, their full participation in many of the sessions and the charity. I saw young people actually getting out of their seats and offering them to others. There was one young lady who was being pushed in a wheel chair and she saw another young pilgrim struggling with crutches, and the lady in the wheel chair offered her lap, which the lady accepted. It was a good thing that there were two strong persons pushing the wheel chair, but never the less; it was the spirit of the events that was in the air. People saw each other as one big Catholic family.

The highlights for me were the vigil service at the race track and our group sharing a reflection at the end of each day event. Our group was very close to the stage at the racetrack, meaning we were very close to the Holy Father. Just being so close to him was a wonderful feeling and hearing him challenging us to resist the lure of materialism and encouraging us to chose and live for Christ. There is something about being in the presence of our Holy Father.

The Australians were gracious host and very friendly people. The food was good, although I was not brave enough to eat kangaroo and crocodile meat. **WORLD YOUTH DAY WAS A WONDERFUL EXPERIENCE!!**

G' day! Thank you for your prayers!!

Sister Yvette



**Some of the 77 pilgrims from New Jersey's Paterson Diocese**

**July 2008**