



More than 5,000 Canadian Youth are making their way to Lisbon, Portugal to be with Pope Francis, from 2 to 6 August 2023. The Holy Father will join more than one million young people for World Youth Day (WYD), an international gathering of youth, organized by the Catholic Church. The first international World Youth Day was held in Rome in 1986, and the event was hosted by Canada in 2002, with Pope Saint John Paul II making the pilgrimage to Toronto.

World Youth Day is an opportunity to hear talks from leading Catholic speakers, and notably, including Bishops from every continent. In addition to catechetical sessions, there are opportunities for prayer and divine worship. A special element of World Youth Day also includes a cultural festival with music, dance, and creative expression, drawing on talented young people from around the world.

The Canadian pilgrims travelling to Portugal represent our provinces, with the largest delegation coming from Ontario, followed closely by the group of Quebec pilgrims from Montreal. Thirteen Bishops will also be making their way to Portugal. A special gathering for Canadian pilgrims will be held in Lisbon on Tuesday, 1 August, organized by a group of young adult volunteers from WYD CANADA on behalf of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops.

In advance of their journey to Lisbon, many of the Canadian delegates will participate in the "Diocesan Days," which will enable them to get acquainted with communities outside of Lisbon, to participate in service projects, and to meet Portuguese families, thus strengthening the bonds of faith between the countries.

The Canadian delegation is composed of young pilgrims from Ontario (42%), Quebec (18% ), British Columbia (12%), Alberta (10%), Saskatchewan (2%) and Manitoba (1%). Some 26 volunteers from British Columbia, Ontario, Quebec, Alberta and Yukon will also be present to help with the festivities in Lisbon.

More than 750,000 people attended the final Mass of the World Youth Day in Toronto with Pope Saint John Paul II, in 2002, and up to two million are expected to attend the final Mass in Lisbon with Pope Francis.

I am happy to share with my parishioners good news that 6 young people from St. Margaret Mary Parish will be representing the Diocese of Hamilton at the International World Youth Day in Portugal. A beautiful ceremony of commissioning of pilgrims took place at the Mass on Sunday, July 23. May the Holy Spirit accompany them as they participate in the joyful celebrations and prayerful moments of World Youth Day.

