

Youth

From Rome to Toronto

Some time after World Youth Day 2000, Msgr. Renato Boccardo was called to fill the post of Head of Protocol with special duties at the Holy See's Secretariat of State, thus leaving the direction of the Pontifical Council for the Laity's Youth Section after nine years' service. His post there has now been assumed by Father Francis Kohn, priest of the diocese of Paris. The change of guard took place just before another important moment of transition: the handing over of the Cross of World Youth Day by Italian to Canadian youth on 8 April 2001, during the ceremony of Palm Sunday presided over by John Paul II in St. Peter's Square.

The seventeenth World Youth Day will in fact be celebrated in Toronto, in Canada. Thousands of youngsters from all over the world will converge on the city and gather round the Pope from 23 to 28 July 2002, to reflect and pray together on the theme: "You are the salt of the earth... You are the light of the world" (Mt 5:13-14). It is John Paul II who, in his traditional Message, provided young people with the fundamental basis for the spiritual preparation of the event: published on 25 July 2001, the Pope's *Message to the Youth of the World* can be obtained from the Pontifical Council for the Laity and is also available on the Holy See's website (www.vatican.va).

Dear young friends – writes the Pope in his message – Toronto is waiting for all of you who can make it! In the heart of a multi-cultural and multi-faith city, we shall speak of Christ as the one Saviour and proclaim the universal salvation of which the Church is the sacrament. In response to the pressing invitation of the Lord who ardently desires "that all may be one" (Jn 17:11), we shall pray for full communion among Christians in truth and charity. Come, and make the great avenues of Toronto resound with the joyful tidings that Christ loves every person and brings to fulfilment every trace of goodness, beauty and truth found in the city of man. Come, and tell the world of the happiness you have found in meeting Jesus Christ, of your desire to know him better, of how you are committed to proclaiming the Gospel of salvation to the ends of the earth! (Message of the Holy Father to the Youth of the World, no. 5).

Preparations

Also from an organizational point of view, the preparations for World Youth Day are in full swing. Representatives of 55 countries and 44 international youth movements, associations and communities were present at the first preparatory meeting, held at the Pontifical Council for the Laity in Rome on 16-17 June 2001. It was chaired by His Eminence Cardinal James Francis Stafford, the Council's President. Also present at this meeting was the whole Canadian Committee, led by Father Thomas Rosica, CSB, to which the practical organization of the seventeenth World Youth Day has been assigned.

A second preparatory meeting was held in Toronto from 10 to 13 January 2002, with a similarly wide participation. Organized directly by the Canadian Committee, the meeting permitted the representatives of the various episcopal conferences, associations and communities to examine the various aspects, both pastoral and logistic, of World Youth Day. Cardinal James Francis Stafford, Bishop Stanislaw Rylko and Father Francis Kohn, representing the Pontifical Council, were present at this meeting.

Cardinal James Francis Stafford paid further visits to Canada from 1 to 4 May and from 15 to 24 November 2001, and attended numerous meetings and sessions of work held by the Canadian Committee for World Youth Day 2002. He gave various talks and visited not only Toronto, but the dioceses of Alberta, Edmonton, Halifax, Quebec, Montreal, Saint-Hyacinthe and Ottawa.