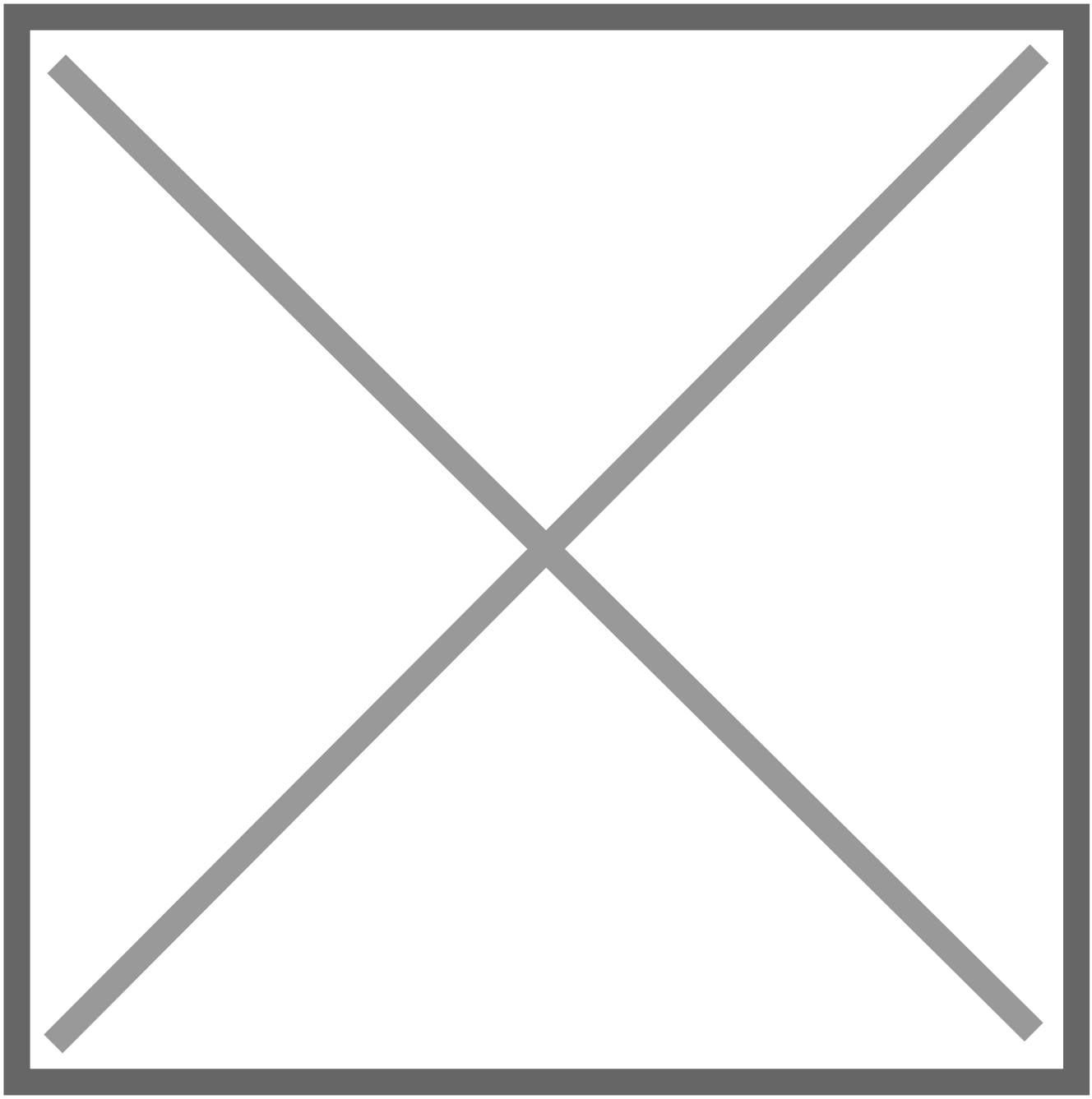
Vatican
News



Fr. João Chagas, head of the Youth Office at the Dicastery for Laity, the Family and Life, holds a Vatican document on World Youth Day as he speaks at a news conference at the Vatican May 18, 2021. Speakers discussed the release of a Vatican document with pastoral guidelines for the celebration of World Youth Day in local dioceses. The document emphasized the importance of the local celebration of World Youth Day as an annual "festival of faith" similar to the international

celebration held every three years. (CNS/Paul Haring)

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Vatican City — May 19, 2021

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The annual diocesan celebration of World Youth Day is an important event that emphasizes the role young people play in the Catholic Church, the Vatican said.

In a document published by the Dicastery for Laity, the Family and Life May 18, the Vatican issued a set of pastoral guidelines for local WYD celebrations "to ensure that younger generations feel that they are at the center of the church's attention and pastoral concern."

"The celebration of these youth days at a local level is therefore extremely useful in keeping the church mindful of the importance of walking with young people and of welcoming them and listening to them with patience while proclaiming the word of God to them with affection and power," it stated.

The document was signed by Cardinal Kevin Farrell, dicastery prefect, and Schonstatt Fr. Alexandre Awi Mello, dicastery secretary. Divided into six chapters, it said local celebrations offer young people "a personal experience of a 'festival of faith,'" which is especially important for those who cannot attend the international event "because of studies, work or financial difficulties."

World Youth Day is celebrated annually on a local level and every two or three years with an international gathering with the pope. In November, Pope Francis moved the local celebrations of World Youth Day from Palm Sunday to the feast of Christ the King.

Speaking with journalists at a Vatican press briefing May 16, Awi said the annual diocesan celebration "can more easily generate a commitment in young people that will change the face of the society in which they live and increase their sense of belonging."

Through these "pastoral guidelines, we would like to make all young people participants in this rich heritage. Their pastors and the various services of youth ministry of the particular churches will thus be able, with pastoral freedom and creativity, to enrich their local experience of the 'youth festival,'" he said.

Maria Lisa Abu Nassar, welcoming coordinator at Rome's San Lorenzo International Youth Center, said the guidelines showed the church's efforts "to open itself, to improve itself, recognizing the people who most need to be loved and guided by the church, helping them to find their identity as children who belong to God."

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A native of Nazareth, Nassar told journalists that given the conflict in her homeland, the local celebration of WYD would give young people the opportunity to forge new friendships and dialogue in the hope "that one day peace will reign in the land where Jesus was born and lived."

"The Holy Land is a small territory with different religions, where Christians are a minority. How important it would be, especially in these days given the situation in Jerusalem and throughout the whole territory, to open the door to dialogue among young people of different religions," Nassar said.

"I believe that all of us young people, despite our differences, start from a common point, we are on the lookout for something, or rather someone who can give meaning to our existence," she added.

Paul Jarzembowski, assistant director for youth and young adult ministries at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, told Catholic News Service that the guidelines

are a great help for local churches to "use this annual liturgical moment to mobilize the youth and young adults in their area."

"World Youth Day, by its very name and nature, is meant for every young person in the world," Jarzembowski said. "No one is excluded or can excuse themselves. This means that church leaders should do everything they can to accompany every single youth and young adult in their area."

The local WYD celebrations, he added, can help young people, especially those who are unable to attend the international celebration or who are not active in their faith community, to "know how much Christ and the church loves, supports and wants to journey with them."

Jarzembowski told CNS the U.S. bishops' conference is currently developing a guidebook to help dioceses apply the guidelines "for the upcoming and future celebrations" of World Youth Day.

"We anticipate releasing this guidebook in late summer or early fall to give parish leaders adequate time to plan for this liturgical occasion in late November 2021," he said. "The USCCB Secretariat of Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth will also be supporting diocesan leaders with resources for planning activities or initiatives around the celebration."