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Pope Francis holds up a gray backpack with the World Youth Day logo as he speaks in a room

Pope Francis speaks to young people in a video message released by the Vatican June 22, 2023, 40 days before World Youth Day gets underway in Lisbon, Portugal. (CNS screengrab/Courtesy Holy See Press Office)



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With a green light from his doctor, Pope Francis has assured young people that he will be with them in Portugal for World Youth Day despite his recent surgery.

"Some think that because of the illness I won't go, but the doctor told me that I can go, so I will be with you," the pope said in a video message released June 22 for pilgrims traveling to Lisbon, Portugal, for World Youth Day Aug. 1-6.

In the video, filmed by Auxiliary Bishop Américo Manuel Alves Aguiar of Lisbon, the pope held up a backpack with the World Youth Day logo, saying "I am ready to go. I have everything in hand because I am looking forward to going."

The pope noted that there are only 40 days until World Youth Day begins, "like a Lent before the meeting in Lisbon."

He then gave some advice to young people, telling them not to listen "to those who reduce life to ideas."

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"Poor people," the pope said, "they've lost the joy of life and the joy of encounter. Pray for them."

Francis encouraged young people, on the other hand, to always move forward while speaking the "three languages of life" -- the languages of the head, heart and hands, which allow people to think, feel and act harmoniously.

In a separate video, the pope spoke to the workers who are preparing the infrastructure that makes World Youth Day possible. While he acknowledged that workers "don't seem like the main characters of World Youth Day," he said they are the ones who hold the entire celebration in place.

Pope Francis thanked them for their work and for being a "seed."

"Because you are like a seed, you will bloom from below," he said. "It's not seen," but "the fruit will show."

This story appears in the **World Youth Day 2023** feature series. View the full series
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