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Pope Francis, seated in his wheelchair, blesses a young man seated in a wheelchair at the en

Pope Francis, seated in his wheelchair, blesses a young man seated in a wheelchair at the end of his weekly general audience Aug. 9, 2023, in the Vatican audience hall. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

Cindy Wooden

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In a world suffering from "diseases of the soul," like pride, hatred and violence, the young people who traveled to Portugal for World Youth Day showed that another way of living and interacting is possible, Pope Francis said.

World Youth Day was not a vacation, but "an encounter with the living Christ in the church. The young people went to encounter Christ," the pope said Aug. 9 at his weekly general audience.

Restarting the Wednesday appointments after a monthlong summer break, Francis used his main audience talk to share some reflections on his trip Aug. 2-6 to Fátima and Lisbon for World Youth Day, an event that saw 1.5 million people gather for a prayer vigil and for Mass.

In addition to the large events with young people from around the world, the pope said he had an opportunity for smaller, more intimate meetings, including with a group of young people from Ukraine, "who shared stories that were painful" about their lives and the losses they have endured since Russia launched a full-scale war on their country.

"While in Ukraine and other places in the world there is fighting, and while in certain hidden halls war is planned -- this is awful, isn't it, wars are planned," he said, "World Youth Day showed everyone that another world is possible: a world of brothers and sisters, where the flags of all peoples fly together, next to each other, without hatred, without fear, without closing up, without weapons!"

"The message of the young people was clear: will the 'great of the earth' listen to it, I wonder, to this youthful enthusiasm that wants peace?" the pope asked. "It is a parable for our time, and even today Jesus says: 'He who has ears, let him hear! He who has eyes, let him look!' We hope the whole world listens to this World Youth Day and sees the beauty of these youth moving forward."

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Francis, who did not read a planned prayer for peace in Ukraine while at the Shrine of Our Lady of Fátima, told people at the audience, "I prayed that God would heal the world of the diseases of the soul: pride, lies, enmity, violence -- these are diseases of the soul, and the world is sick with these diseases."

And, he said, while at the shrine, "we renewed the consecration of ourselves, of Europe, of the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary," he said. "I prayed for peace because there are many wars in many parts of the world."

Addressing Polish speakers at the audience, Francis offered his blessing to the thousands of people making the traditional August pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady of Jasna Góra in Czestochowa.

"I entrust you with a desire I have in my heart: the desire for peace in the world," he told the pilgrims. "Present it to the one who is the Queen of Peace. Ask for this priceless gift, especially for the dear and tormented Ukraine."

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