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Brazilians look forward to greeting new pope at World Youth Day

by Lise Alves by Catholic News Service

World Youth Day 2013

Sao Paulo — Hundreds of thousands of pre-Lenten Carnival-goers diverted their attention from the festivities to pay attention to the news of Pope Benedict XVI's resignation.

National television networks halted their coverage of the four-day festival Monday to dedicate most of the morning broadcasts to the news coming from the Vatican and reactions from Brazilians.

Organizers of the World Youth Day 2013, set for July 23-28 in Rio de Janeiro, said plans will continue as scheduled even though the identity of the new pope would not be known for several weeks.

Plans for a starting date for a conclave to choose Pope Benedict's successor were just beginning Monday.

Archbishop Orani Joao Tempesta of Rio de Janeiro said shortly after the papal announcement that while Catholics were stunned with the news, young people remained committed to making the six-day celebration of faith a momentous event.

"We in Rio de Janeiro hope to welcome the new pope and hundreds of thousands of youths from around the world for this encounter with Jesus Christ," he told reporters.

The archbishop said that the youths should "continue to pack up their bags and continue to prepare for the journey to Rio."

When asked if the pope had ever signaled any intention of stepping down, Tempesta said the pontiff stated a few times during World Youth Day preparation meetings, "The pope will go to the event. ...

Either I or my successor will be there."

Pope Benedict XVI visited Brazil once, in 2007, when he canonized St. Galvao, Brazil's first saint, and opened the Fifth General Conference of Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean in Aparecida.

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