

WYD Lisbon 2023. Fr Falabretti (CEI): “Strong wish to be there.” The journey of Italian youths starts November 20

The journey of the Italian Church towards the 27th World Youth Day (WYD), to be held in Lisbon, from 1 to 6 August 2023, will start next November 20, Feast of Christ the King, with the theme: "Mary got up and went in haste." The director of the National Service for Youth Ministry (SNPG), Father **Michele Falabretti** made the announcement to SIR. Fr Falabretti returned just a few days ago from Fatima, which hosted the WYD preparatory meeting attended by youth ministry delegates from around the world.



During the meeting, representatives of the local organizing committee, COL, reviewed the progress of the WYD organization, its programme, the work of the volunteers and technical matters such as the issuing of visas for participants from non-Schengen countries who regularly attend international WYDs. The WYD in Lisbon WYD was initially scheduled for the summer of 2022, but it was postponed to August 2023 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It will therefore be the first post-COVID WYD and the closest to the African continent, given its small distance from Portugal.



“Sometimes the WYD in Lisbon is referred to as if it were an African WYD because of its geographical proximity. In fact, many young people from Africa are expected to participate,” added Father Falabretti. He pointed out that during the preparatory meeting in Fatima it was stressed “that visas should be requested in advance so as to prevent any delays in their issuance. There are laws to be respected. Anyway, the fact remains that Lisbon and Portugal’s dioceses are preparing to welcome the young pilgrims in the best possible ways.” More than 400 voluntary workers are involved in the organization process with 21 Portuguese dioceses that have been especially dedicated to setting up preparatory and awareness-raising events for the past months. These include the pilgrimage of the symbols of the WYD, the Cross and the Marian icon, taking place in the Portuguese dioceses, which paves the way for the WYD. Fr Falabretti pointed out that the WYD will have a special “Marian relevance, given its theme – ‘Mary got up and went in haste’ - and its proximity, not only geographical, to the Fatima shrine. **Widespread enthusiasm.** “There is great enthusiasm and dedication amidst the organizers of the WYD,” said Fr Falabretti. “Normally, events of this magnitude are fraught with organizational challenges, but the organizing committee has made a tremendous and comprehensive effort. We were in the vast plains near the Vasco de Gama Bridge where all the equipment is being set up for the prayer vigil and the final Mass. Preparations are proceeding apace and in the esplanade, at a glance, everything seems to be in place, with services and facilities to welcome the young pilgrims to

be arranged." The Organizing Committee has not yet given an estimate of the number of participants, but approximately one million people are expected to attend the final event. "There could be 50-60 thousand Italian youths attending," added the SNPG Director. It's still early to say, but in our dioceses we perceive great expectation and a strong desire to be there."

