

Black Ribbon Day is the anniversary of the signing of the Molotov Ribbentrop pact, where Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia divided the lands and peoples situated between them into their regimes. Twenty Five years ago, Canada's Central and Eastern European communities, by initiating Black Ribbon Day, were instrumental in bringing international attention and understanding of the plight of their heritage nations. This solely Canadian initiative organized demonstrations in 21 cities on both sides of the Iron Curtain. In 1989 close to 2 million people formed a human chain across the Baltic republics and by 1991, demonstrations were held in 56 cities on three continents. On August 23rd 2011, the Central and Eastern European Council will organize memorial services in Toronto, Vancouver, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Ottawa and Montreal. In each city, all communities will be invited to a central place of worship.

International World Youth Day

Perspective: An outside glance of an international World Youth Day would spark a bystander's curiosity as massive crowds of young people flood the city streets. Some might cringe at the thought of those words, wondering what delinquency is in store, but to witness *this* gathering would end those fears. The happenstance observer would witness not angst and malice, but smiles and joy, singing and dancing young people, culture upon culture and nation upon nation, proudly holding their flags high (or wearing them), greeting one another in peace, trading their tokens, humbly realizing how small they are in a world of people, and strengthened to witness so many who share their convictions. How did it all begin?

Beginnings: In 1984 at the close of the Holy Year of Redemption, over 300,000 young people from around the world responded to the invitation of His Holiness John Paul II for an International Jubilee of youth on Palm Sunday in St. Peter's square. Looking out to the crowds who answered his invitation he said, "What a fantastic spectacle is presented on this stage by your gathering here today! Who claimed that today's youth has lost their sense of values? Is it really true that they cannot be counted on?" It was at this gathering that the Holy Father entrusted to the youth what is now known as the World Youth Day Cross, to be carried throughout the world as a symbol of the love of Christ for humanity.

First World Youth Day: The following Palm Sunday, coinciding with the United Nation's International Year of the Youth, Our Holy Father took the opportunity to welcome the youth of the world to Rome again. Later, announcing the institution of World Youth Day on

December 20, 1985, and the first official WYD was held in 1986.

International WYDs: The following year brought about a new tradition when the second event and first international WYD took place in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Every Palm Sunday has since been designated as a World Youth Day, alternately celebrated the diocesan and international levels. There have been 10 International World Youth Day celebrations, where the youth continue to answer the invitation of the Holy Father in staggering numbers and carry home the message received there to be Christ's light to the world. While these events are organized by the clergy and laity of the Catholic Church, youth of all faiths are invited to attend and encounter Christ, making this gathering truly universal.

Reflection: In Toronto, the last International WYD in which JP II was present he told the 800,000 gathered with him at the vigil, "When, back in 1985, I wanted to start the World Youth Days... I imagined a *powerful moment* in which the young people of the world could meet Christ, who is eternally young, and could learn from him how to be *bearers of the Gospel to other young people*. This evening, together with you, I praise God and give thanks to him for the gift bestowed on the Church through the World Youth Days. Millions of young people have taken part, and as a result have become better and more committed Christian witnesses."

John Paul II left a legacy for the youth in his institution of World Youth Day, which Pope Benedict XVI has faithfully continued, carrying on the hope of His predecessor for the youth of the world, inviting them and commissioning them as Christ's disciples to be faithful living witnesses.

Prayer for the World Youth Day 2000

"...The Pope calls us to the Jubilee of Your Incarnation, O Lord.

We answer his call with eagerness and hope, anxious to find You, to know You and to know we are brothers and sisters in Your Church.

Lord Jesus, free our hearts of fear and sin, renew them through the experience of love and forgiveness, so we may put our lives at the service of the poor.

*Jesus Christ, Son of God,
we are Your brothers and sisters
we love You, we follow You!..."*