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Approximately 50 youth from the Archdiocese of Baltimore are in Sydney, Australia, for World Youth Day, July 15-20.

Pope Benedict XVI will preside over the five-day event, and Archbishop Edwin F. O'Brien, Archbishop of Baltimore, will also attend. A crowd of more than 250,000 is expected.

While in Sydney, the young pilgrims will experience opportunities for prayer and self-reflection, historical sight-seeing, and the Australian culture.

"The World Youth Day is a once-in-a-lifetime experience," Scott Miller, coordinator of Adolescent Youth Formation for the Division of Youth and Young Adult Ministry told The Catholic Review. "Some of them spend months and sometimes years raising money and saving for this."

Because the cost to attend can be as much as \$5,000 per individual, many parishes provided financial support.

Locally, the Church of the Resurrection in Ellicott City will have a two-day celebration July 19-20 and will host a viewing of the closing Mass celebrated by Pope Benedict. Other parishes also plan to honor the celebration by hosting similar events.

Because of communications challenges, such as the time difference and calling internationally, Baltimore pilgrims will post photos and blogs of their experiences on the Archdiocese of Baltimore's website, www.archbalt.org/wyd2008.

First started in 1985, World Youth Day occurs every three years and is a "festival of encounter and solidarity." Youth between the ages of 16 and 30 gather together from all over the world to strengthen faith and establish identity among the Church through prayer, worship, and discussion. The event has been recognized as instrumental to the future of the faith as the next generation of Church leaders

gathers to share ideas.