

# **WYD organizers preparing for Madrid 2011 with Facebook, YouTube**

VATICAN CITY - World Youth Day organizers, who are expecting more than 2 million participants, are preparing for the 2011 event in Madrid with Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and fundraisers using text messages.

Social networking sites have been key outlets “for raising awareness, mobilizing, communicating and financing World Youth Day,” said Auxiliary Bishop Cesar Franco Martinez of Madrid, who is the general coordinator of the Aug. 16-21 international event.

Bishop Franco and others spoke Oct. 5 at a Vatican news conference on the preparations involved in next year’s gathering.

Maria de Jaureguizar, vice director of communications for World Youth Day 2011, said, “It will be a WYD that is fully immersed in the Internet, the place where young people today meet.”

“All information and all promotional materials can be found on the official website,” [www.madrid11.com](http://www.madrid11.com), interested participants can plan and “interact” on special pages and accounts organizers have set up on a variety of social networking sites, she said.

As of Oct. 5, there were more than 165,000 fans of World Youth Day on Facebook, she said. WYD organizers set up 19 separate Facebook accounts in different languages, including Chinese and Arabic.

Organizers also established a special telephone number where people in Spain can send a text message to donate \$1.60 toward a “solidarity fund” that will enable youths from poorer countries to participate. All registrants are also being asked to contribute \$14 to the same fund.

Bishop Franco said they launched a fundraising website, [www.muchasgracias.info](http://www.muchasgracias.info),

where donors from all over the world can contribute any amount they wish either to a general fund or for specific items and initiatives such as liturgical objects or housing and feeding volunteers.

Numerous businesses have helped out as sponsors and government agencies are showing “maximum collaboration” in working with the church to make the event a success, said Cardinal Antonio Rouco Varela of Madrid.

He said 20,000 volunteers will be “the backbone of World Youth Day,” helping shuttle pilgrims from airports and train stations and helping do media outreach. Numerous families in Madrid will be opening their homes to offer young people a place to stay, the cardinal said, while schools, gyms and churches will also serve as no-frills accommodations.

Bishop Franco said so far 170,000 young people have registered, and they expect 600,000 to register before the event. He said only 25-30 percent of those who take part in World Youth Day events actually register for the gathering. Online registration can be done at [www.madrid11.com](http://www.madrid11.com).

De Jaureguizar said those who are unable to attend World Youth Day in Madrid can participate virtually by watching their web TV coverage and following along with news and people’s testimonies on their social networking sites.