

My experience in the WYD + FC of Panama

Vocational Letter – March 2019.

I liked the recent WYD in Panama and it has been fruitful for me. I will share some examples.

I was fascinated by the festive reception at the airport, in "Mi Pueblito" (the municipality of the capital), with the subway, streets, shops; and having been treated as a special visitor of that town. And what do you think about the tattooing they gave me? In addition, having been welcomed into a local family, I shared the floor to sleep, dressed and listened to nocturnal "melodies," having to wait to use a common bathroom, clean my area and take out the garbage, go shopping in the neighborhood, getting in line to get my "rations," having to walk a long way to get to the meeting place; all simple, normal and very everyday things.

I enjoyed presiding over the inaugural mass in our pre-conferences, concelebrating with many other missionaries and of course, most importantly with the young people; enabling them to have a voice and vote when selecting and awarding the Prize Claret-Vida to the best Claretian practices in favor of life; to have witnessed the practice of the "Synodality" by these young people in relation to pastoral matters.

I loved sharing unforgettable days with other members of the Claretian Family.

The recurring invitation to reflect personally and deeply, on "Let it be done to me ..." in this concrete moment of my life-mission impacted me, as it may have happened to Mary, the Mother of Jesus.

I was amazed by the reception of the WYD cross at the RMI school, and entering as a pilgrim in the National Shrine (not as an "owner" or ...), the missionary exhibitions and presentation about the refugees, vocational fare, gesture of solidarity through the streets and other visible signs of ecological conversion.

I was enriched when visiting significant monuments and listen to stories of martyrs that have marked the history of this country, awakening me to the complexity of its current challenges.

I sensed some young people asking for spiritual advice as well as having the opportunity to confess. Similarly, I was speechless when, after having borrowed from a young man his shoes to play football (with Colombian rules we had to agree at the beginning, where the team that makes more goals don't always win), then shortly after, he asked me to use my slippers in a brilliant moment of humor with a Chilean accent.

The beauty and diversity that the cultural moments provided us is unforgettable; each procession offered a true and worthy show, sharing the best of their traditions and values. Prophetic gestures that overcome conflicts and rivalries, builders of bridges of peace, dialogue and justice stood out in each event.

I appreciated where faced with the absence of so many young participants from Europe, Africa, Asia and Oceania, though not easy to "digest", we were able to give the possibility of being in tune through constant online transmissions and reports that narrowed a sense of "closeness."

I've been dazzled by the generosity, quality and responsibility of the many volunteers and who led each moment and sector. I "take my hat off to them," because they have contributed in giving credibility to

this significant experience in the itinerary of growth, formation and accompaniment of the "young vineyard."

I've been infected by the genuine joy and emotion of each person and the multitude walking with me, with other pilgrims, and of course, with Pope Francis. Even when he moved quickly from one place to another (seeing him, in the encounters and the wonderful celebrations).

There are many other aspects that I haven't mentioned nor need to add. Those of us who enjoyed being present until the final celebration, we know how much we valued and appreciated everything we experienced, expressed and shared. And what hasn't been so good? Well, we have already commented constructively on these points in the forum.

These days with the Claretian Family were very special. The popular wisdom of my country says that "there are not two without three." So, after the WYD in Krakow 2016 and in Panama 2019. Let's see in 2022, if God wants it to happen in Portugal, my country which is also yours. Invite me again or you just may find me as a volunteer.

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