

This coming Friday morning we will embark on our **World Youth Day pilgrimage**. I can with certainty and with gratitude that you have made this possible by your prayers, encouraging words, financial support and participation in the myriad of fund raising events. Below is a picture of some of the delegates at the Parish Send-Off last Sunday during the Picnic.



For me the preparations for World Youth Day have been a great blessing. I feel constantly blessed that young people accept me as their spiritual father. This Sunday in the homily I hope to address the two great tasks of youth. As Pope John Paul II used to say, **youth is not so much a chronological age but a time of decision**: Why am I here? What is the purpose of my existence? What plan does God have for me? How can I know and respond to that plan? These will be the questions we ask as we visit the sacred sites in Rome and Assisi – and during the days catechesis and prayer in Madrid with the Holy Father – and Archbishop Sartain.

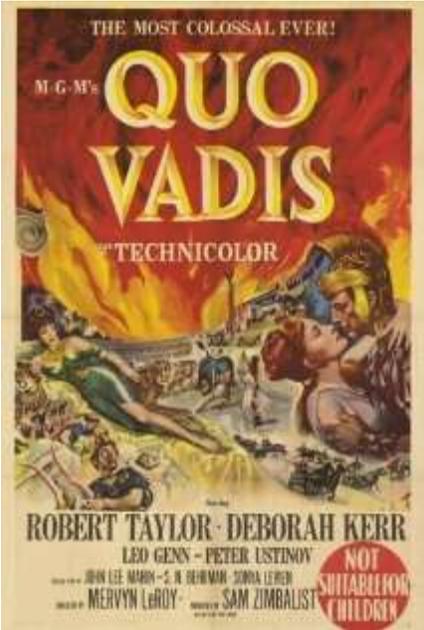
Speaking of our archbishop, we had a wonderful Mass with him on Monday evening. He spoke about the difference between being a pilgrim and a tourist – and that what we receive from World Youth Day, we must bring back to family, friends and parish. **Archbishop Sartain** will be with us during the five days in Madrid. The picture below shows part of our combined St. Mary of the Valley-Holy Family group. The Northwest Progress will have panoramic picture of the Archbishop with WYD pilgrims.



Some have asked if we still need donations. The answer is “yes.” There are some expenses that we did calculate from the beginning such as tips for tour guides and bus drivers during our time in Rome and Assisi, the fuel surcharge because of the great difference between oil prices a year ago and in April when tickets were purchased and the unexpected extra day because of airline scheduling. Most of these expenses have been covered by fund raising and by additional payments from the families of delegates. Still, we will be most grateful for your support in our final World Youth Day collection. I have received some nice contributions for the group’s “last supper” but I am also aware that it costs more for a meal in Madrid than in Monroe.

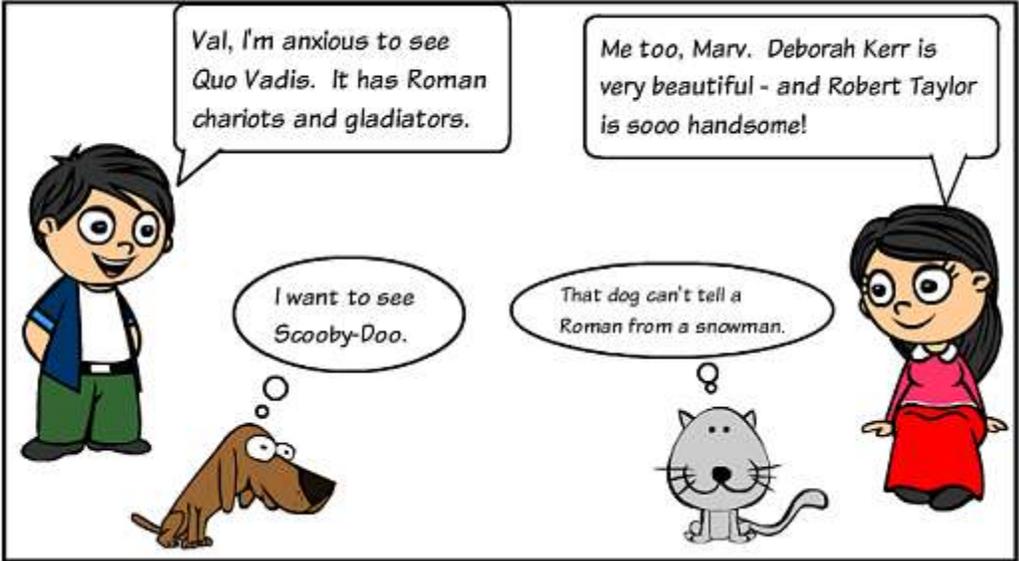
While I am on this pilgrimage, you will be blessed by the presence of **Fr. Bill Peterson**. While he is here, he will be making an appeal for his religious order – the Redemptorists. This is part of the **Missionary Cooperation Plan** of the Archdiocese that asks each parish to receive a missionary appeal every two or three years. I can think of no one better than Father Peterson, and I know you are grateful to him for all his service to our parish. Father Peterson will be here the weekend of the 13th and 14th. He will stay for the 9 a.m. Mass on the August 15, which is the Feast of the Assumption. On the weekend of August 20-21, we will have **Fr. Richard Gallagher** for the 5 p.m. Mass, **Fr. Jose Ugalde** at 9:30 a.m. and a yet unnamed priest for the noon Mass. Our WYD delegation returns on late evening of August 24, and so I will be here for the following weekend Masses.

Before for our departure I want to invite you to one last event. On Wednesday evening we will project the **Quo Vadis** movie in our parish hall. It is a wonderful, engaging film – as my cartoon characters indicate. Although it is temperate by today’s standards, it does have some violence and a love theme that makes it apt for adults and mature high school students, but not for children. With that caution in mind, the movie does a marvelous job of bringing the viewer into the world of the Rome under Nero, a vain and capricious emperor. It dramatically depicts the persecution that Christians faced when Nero blamed them for the burning of Rome. The showing begins at 6 p.m. During intermission we will serve pizza, Mexican food, popcorn, snacks and drinks. **Out of gratitude to parishioners, the evening is completely free.** We will of course have a donation jar available. ☺



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Finally, I ask you to sign the book for **prayer requests**. We will be taking your intentions with us as we visit the tombs of the saints: Peter and Paul, Francis and Clare, the Spanish Martyrs, etc. I will also be taking all the names enrolled last summer as we prayed for Healing of the Family Tree. I am grateful to you for your prayers during the Novena for Youth and the round-the-clock prayers you will be offering between August 12 and 24. Thank you, and may God bless you and your family members.

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