

**emmanuelworship**

## **WORSHIP FILE**

### **Youth in Worship: a Grace to Embrace**

by Pat Keady

I returned recently from a Teenagers camp on the Gold Coast called 'Zero Gravity' pumped and exhilarated, and for many excellent reasons. One of the reasons was simply that teenagers are FUN. They like to have fun, which means life around them is not so serious all the time. What a drag that would be! Another reason is that teenagers are so OPEN. Open to prayer, open to Jesus, open to the Holy Spirit, open to the sacraments, open to crazy games, open to dancing, open to singing, open to life! Being among these young people reminded me of something **Pope Benedict** wrote recently about his own youth:



**“When I think back on that time, I remember above all that we were not willing to settle for a conventional middle-class life. we wanted something great, something new... We wanted to break out into the open, to experience the whole range of human possibilities... This urge to break out of the ordinary is present in every generation. Part of being young is desiring something beyond everyday life and a secure job, a yearning for something truly greater.”**

(Message for WYD 2011)

'Amen Papa!' - the desire for something greater, to break out into the open. This passion, this exuberance and openness to the Spirit is not meant to be confined to young people, as Benedict went on to say:

**“Is this simply an empty dream that fades away as we become older? No!”**

How many of us have allowed this 'dream of something greater to fade away as we become older'? Instead of 'breaking out of the ordinary', succumbing to the ordinary. Not that Christ doesn't challenge us to find Him in the ordinary events of daily life; that is one of the first lessons we are all led 'down the mountain' to learn. But it can be easy to forget that Jesus was still the miracle-worker from Galilee who drew thousands of people *up* mountainsides, who created a stir wherever he went, who continually did things that were unpredictable, spontaneous, exciting and new. Like eating at Zacheuss house. Like forgiving the crippled man his sins. Like raising a widows son from the dead. Like walking on water. Like calling the Pharisee's a 'brood of snakes!' Like...you get the picture.

**“No one pours new wine into old wineskins”** he said, speaking of his ministry; **“otherwise the skins will burst and the wine will be spilled. No, new wine is poured into new wineskins”**.

**ONE of the new things young people have to offer the Church is a vibrant and dynamic experience of WORSHIP.** As young Catholics around the world prepare to descend upon Madrid for World Youth Day, I am reminded of the experiences and images imprinted on my mind after the last WYD in Sydney. I returned home with images of throngs of young people swept up in worship of their Saviour and King, Jesus Christ. Hands lifted, heads back, eyes closed, hearts open, voices full; dancing and shouting with charismatic, Franciscan boldness and joy; singing and swaying together as if connected at the hip; moving into moments of hushed reverence as if by a divine Conductor.

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The whole experience was like a *river of worship* flowing among us for the week. Sometimes it was more like a waterfall, cascading in free-fall praise, at other times a strong and flowing river, and other times a deep, still pool. One of the gifts of young people is that they remind us *to experience the whole river*. In other words, a ‘worship geography’ that includes deep pools and gentle rivers, but also rapids and waterfalls - the unexpected, the daring, the exciting and the spontaneous.

‘Ben 16’ (as the Pope is graciously dubbed on millions of enthusiastic t-shirts)



concluded his WYD Message with the following words: **“Dear young people, the Church depends on you! She needs your lively faith, your creative charity and the energy of your hope. Your presence renews, rejuvenates and gives new energy to the Church. That is why World Youth days are a grace, not only for you, but for the entire people of God.”**

We either believe that or we don't. My prayer is that ‘the entire people of God’ would welcome the passion for Jesus and openness in worship that young people bring to the Church. Like the Holy Spirit, it is not something to be feared or resisted, but a Grace to be embraced. The Church was born in an explosion of praise: may She continue to be reborn in the same manner.

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