

## **WYD MADRID 2011**

### **'Planted and Built up in Jesus Christ, Firm in the Faith'**

How wonderful it is to be young and Catholic in our times! And what an incredible blessing it is to have such a gathering as World Youth Day where we can witness to the whole world, in such great numbers, the vitality, truth and beauty of our Faith!

We spent the days leading up to WYD in Vigo where we were hosted by families of the Diocese. They accepted us as if we were family, even though they had just met us. They took us on excursions and tours to show us their city. They spoilt us with the famous Galician hospitality, even though we could only give them an inadequate 'Gracias!' in return. They prepared us for the pilgrimage to Madrid by demonstrating the universality and strength of the Faith.

This universality was even more pronounced on the streets of Madrid, with pilgrims chanting and singing in every language and the bright flags of every nation filling the pavements, parks and cafes! We attended packed Catechesis sessions with inspirational bishops from America and the eastern states of Australia. But the World Youth Day week was also a test of our firmness of faith. Enormous crowds and small city streets made getting to and participating in the major events very difficult. We struggled to keep up with multi-lingual instructions and liturgies. The physical discomforts of searing heat and lots of walking tested our ability to remain cheerful and charitable with our fellow pilgrims. And, probably most testing of all, we were caught up in one of the anti-papal protests on our way to a pro-life gathering. All these experiences, though, only served to build up our resolve, solidify our faith in Jesus Christ and increase our love of His Church.

Overall, the pilgrimage to World Youth Day Madrid was, for me, a testing of my firmness of faith, and a lesson in generosity, in Christian self-giving. And it was, of course, by the generous donations of individuals and the sponsorship of church organisations that made the journey to Spain, for many of us, possible in the first place. I sincerely thank the Knights of the Southern Cross for investing in me as a pilgrim to WYD Madrid.

Siobhan