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What happened at the last Jubilee of Youth?

Saint John Paul II convoked the first Jubilee of Youth in 2000. It was the central event of the Great Jubilee of the Catholic Church, marking the 15th World Youth Day and bringing together more than two million young people from around the world.

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What the Jubilee of Youth in 2000 sounded like

The Jubilee of Youth in the year 2000 had a unique soundtrack, composed of thousands of voices, hymns, prayer, silence, and applause... which still echo in the hearts of those who were there. Each group of pilgrims brought its own songs, dances, and expressions of faith. People sang in French, Polish, English, Korean, Arabic, Portuguese, and, above all, the shared language of Christian joy.

The official hymn: “Emmanuel”

“Emmanuel,” composed by Marco Frisina was the official hymn of the Jubilee, at the heart of its music, with its simple yet solemn melody, steady rhythm, and deeply biblical lyrics (“Emmanuel, God with us”).

Silence also speaks

But silence, too, had its own sound. At Tor Vergata, when night fell over that vast field of pilgrims, the atmosphere was transformed. Before the Blessed Sacrament exposed, the murmuring gave way to a reverent, awe-filled silence. Among two million young people, all that could be heard was the whisper of the wind and the rustle of backpacks as they knelt down. It was one of the most eloquent moments of the entire week.

A symphony of universal faith

The Jubilee of 2000 didn't sound like a concert, but like a symphony of a young and living Church, where every culture contributed its own rhythm and voice. It wasn't noise; it was joy. It wasn't chaos; it was universality. It wasn't a show; it was shared prayer.

That's what Rome sounded like in August 2000: hope turned into song. Want to hear it?

The Jubilee of Youth held in Rome in August 2000 was one of the largest and most moving events of the Great Jubilee. The Italian capital became the beating heart of a young and universal Church.

Here are some of the key facts and figures that reflect the spiritual, human, and logistical magnitude of that gathering.

Universality of the Church

The prayer vigil and final Mass at Tor Vergata brought together more than two million young people from around the world. It was a powerful witness to the Church's youth and universality. The international participation was truly remarkable.

According to Vatican data, attendees came from around 160 countries. Of the more than two million participants, approximately 1.4 million were from Italy, while 600,000 made the pilgrimage from other continents.

Spiritual accompaniment

In addition to the impressive number of participants, the Jubilee stood out for its deep spiritual dimension. More than 2,000 priests were available to hear confessions from the young people, with 312 outdoor confessionals set up for the occasion. The closing Mass was celebrated by Pope John Paul II and concelebrated by 323 bishops and cardinals, along with more than 600 priests who had given catechesis throughout the week.

Large-scale organization

The logistical organization of the event was monumental. Thirty kilometers of new roads were built to improve access and circulation for the pilgrims. Between 12,000 and 14,000 portable toilets were installed, and 81 lighting towers were set up.

Due to the intense Roman summer heat, between five and six million liters of mineral water were distributed, and nearly nine million meals were served, thanks to the efforts of 350 mobile kitchens.

Healthcare was another carefully planned aspect: 197 doctors, 305 nurses, and 374 medical technicians took part. Over the course of the week, around 2,000 people received treatment for minor ailments such as heat exhaustion and fatigue.

Among the most memorable symbolic elements was the 36-meter wooden cross that stood at the center of the main stage. The communal dimension of the event was made possible thanks to the dedication of 25,000 volunteers, who carried out logistical, hospitality, and support roles. Security was overseen by a deployment of 5,500 police officers.

These figures are striking not only for their scale, but for what they represent: the deep desire of thousands of young people to encounter Christ, to share their faith with the whole Church, and to respond generously to St. John Paul II's invitation: "Do not be afraid! Open wide the doors to Christ."

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