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Rio sees WYD as boost for Brazil's shrinking Catholic population

August 25, 2011



Archbishop Orani João Tempesta of Rio de Janeiro says that the city is looking forward to hosting World Youth Day in 2013.

"We want to show that Rio is not just sports and carnivals," the Brazilian archbishop told *L'Osservatore Romano*. He said that World Youth Day would be a welcome sign of hope for "our young people who are afflicted with problems like poverty, violence, and drugs."

Brazil sent a strong delegation of 16,000 young people to World Youth Day in Madrid, demonstrating the strength of the Catholic Church in the country. But that strength may be in jeopardy. A study by the Getulio Vargas Foundation found that the Catholic proportion of Brazil's population has dropped by 6%--from 74% to 69%--in the past six years. At the current rate, within 20 years Brazil would no longer be a majority Catholic. The study found that the percentage of Catholics was dropping fastest among teenagers: the group that would be the primary target of the World Youth Day observance.

Rio de Janeiro has a busy schedule of hosting international events in the next several years. The next international meeting for World Youth Day, which would ordinarily have been set for 2014, was moved up to 2013 because Rio is hosting the World Cup soccer championship in 2014. In 2016 the city will host the Olympic Games. Next year, Rio is the site of a major UN conference on sustainable development.

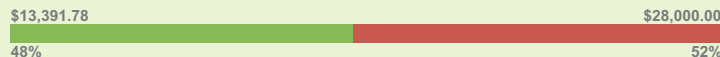
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