

# WORLD YOUTH DAY DRAWS CRITICS

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on critics of World Youth Day:

Next week, a crowd of roughly one million will gather in Madrid for World Youth Day. Pilgrims, mostly teenagers, will arrive on August 15 for one week; the pope will arrive on August 18 and close the proceedings on August 21. Against the backdrop of this overwhelming support—from all over the globe—are some enemies of the pope, as well as those who say the event costs too much. Europa Laica (Secular Europe) is actually more principled than the other critics: it wants to scrub society clean of religion, thus its opposition.

Those who oppose World Youth Day for economic reasons, and they include 120 priests, are not convincing. The number crunchers say it will cost between \$72 and \$86 million to accommodate the crowd, maintaining it is too expensive given Spain's dire economic condition. They need to go back to their calculators and tally the revenues that the event will spawn. For example, if a million young people spend an average of \$20 per day, over seven days that will generate \$140 million. Moreover, this is gravy: 80 percent of the cost of the event will be paid for by the pilgrims; Catholic non-profit companies and corporations will pick up the rest of the tab.

Still, the critics aren't satisfied. They blame the corporations which are contributing to World Youth Day for their current economic condition. Yet one of the largest corporate donors is Coca-Cola, and it has a foundation in Madrid that promotes, among other things, economic development. Indeed, it specifically targets Spanish youth in areas ranging from the arts to science.

Pope Benedict XVI will not only delight young people from all over the world, he will give them the kind of spiritual

inspiration that no one else can deliver. Moreover, as a byproduct of his presence, he will generate more cash into the Spanish economy than any event his austerity-minded critics could ever stage.