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Youth Day a chance to renew spirituality

BY GIANNI COLAVECCHIA
Staff Writer

For Francesca Soldano, World Youth Day gives young Catholics a chance to renew their spirituality.

"The reason I'm involved is to get back into my faith because as a teenager, there are so many temptations and there is so much freedom. It's just a way to get back to the way you were when you were younger."

But the OAC student at Thornhill's St. Robert Catholic High School, who has taken part in the Good Friday procession in Toronto's Little Italy for the last five years, isn't sure how many will attend the event in July.

"People are too stuck in their ways. They're too materialistic," she lamented.

Ms Soldano, who has helped attract nearly 100 students to the event through her work on the school's WYD communications committee, said her goal is to meet one person from every part of the

world between July 18 and 28. According to WYD 2002 National Office communications officer Christina Parsons, the event will provide ample opportunity for people between the ages of 16 and 35 years to come together.

From July 18 to 21, participants are scheduled to take part in social activities throughout Canada's dioceses.

They are to converge on Toronto's Exhibition Place and Downsview Lands between July 23 and 28 so they can participate in other social events as well as pilgrimages, discussions with bishops and religious activities with the Pope or his replacement.

"People that come to World Youth Day are young people who are on a spiritual journey," she said.

The show will go on, Ms Parsons added, whether or not the Pope is able to attend. But she's betting he will be in Toronto in July.

"The Pope is not well obviously. But they've been focused on the death of

Pope John Paul II for the last 10 years," she remarked.

"Mentally, he's very strong. He's determined to come to World Youth Day. He has a great love for the youth and it's very important to him."

Pope or no Pope, Nadia Sutton is determined to make the most of World Youth Day.

Ms Sutton, a 17-year-old resident of King Township, believes the good will of John Paul II's flock will overpower any disappointment if he is unable to attend the highly anticipated event.

"The spirit will still be there, the youth are what make it," she said. "I am sure we will still get together and have a good time."

The Grade 12 student at Aurora's Cardinal Carter Catholic High School is among dozens of people across York Region preparing for World Youth Day 2002, a gathering of nearly 500,000

See VOLUNTEERS, page 23.

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