



WACOM – World Apostolic Congress on Mercy



WACOM - Fifth International Apostolic Congress on the Divine Mercy, Samoa 2023

From 20-26 May 2023 the Fifth International Apostolic Congress on the Divine Mercy took place in Apia, Samoa. Around 600 participants with a devotion to the Divine Mercy were in attendance from all over the world, especially from Oceania and Asia.

The Vatican's Dicastery for Evangelization, (Section for Fundamental Questions on Evangelization in the world) was present with an official delegation led by Bishop Franz-Peter Tebartz-van Elst and Father Juan Pablo Sierra, an official of the Dicastery. Throughout the Congress participants reflected on the theme of the Divine Mercy, assisted by lectures and testimonies on the *theme 'The Divine Mercy: Ocean of love which surrounds the entire world.'*

Many areas were covered, starting from the themes which had been chosen for the *Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy* which took place in 2016, and which invited people to be 'merciful as the Father is merciful'. The accent this time was on evangelization, the Church's essential task, which must always put mercy at the heart of its preaching.

Delegates also reflected on the theme of the spirituality of mercy in the message of St Faustina Kowalska, and on the importance of reaching out to young people, both as recipients of mercy and bearers of mercy in the third millennium. One of the main topics covered was the impact of global problems and their impact on the Samoan Islands – problems such as climate change, care of our common home and the themes highlighted by Pope Francis in *Laudato Si'*.

Every WACOM conference is enriched and rendered unique by the culture of the host nation. Samoa was no exception with its rich traditions and values. One thinks of the strong family bonds which build unity and help create a healthy wider society. Another striking aspect of the host nation was how it has inculturated the Gospel, a process that has involved revisiting indigenous traditions and pre-existing values of community to open new horizons for the future. Delegates were able to consider how, even in very diverse cultures, the unity of the Universal Church can be manifested.

Some of the highly distinctive aspects of Samoan culture were much in evidence ... a great sense of hospitality and generosity, respect for tradition, love of God and His Holy Mother, and of course the typical enthusiasm of the Samoans for singing and dancing. It is certain that the fifth WACOM conference will long remain in the memories of the people of Samoa, who mobilized their whole country to welcome delegates, who left, without doubt, the profound impact of the message of Divine Mercy on these splendid Pacific islands.

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