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Pope Francis begins his trip to attend the 31st World Youth Day and greets a group of young refugees

The Holy Father today began his fifteenth international apostolic trip, to Krakow, Poland, the city hosting the 31st World Youth Day from 27 to 31 July. The Pope departed from Rome's Fiumicino Airport at 2 p.m. and is expected to arrive at John Paul II International Airport in Balice-Krakow at around 4 p.m.

Upon leaving the Domus Sanctae Marthae residence, the Pope was greeted by a group of fifteen young refugees – nine boys and six girls – of different nationalities, who arrived in Italy a short while ago and are still without the necessary documentation enabling them to travel abroad. The young people, supported by the Apostolic Almoner, wished the Pope a good trip and happy participation in the WYD, which they are unable to attend but in which they join spiritually.

The schedule for this afternoon, the first day of the Pope's apostolic trip, consists of an official but informal welcome at the airport with hymns and military honours. The Pope will be received by the president of the Republic of Poland, Andrzej Duda, and his wife, along with Cardinal Stanislaw Dziwisz, archbishop of Krakow, and two children. The ceremony was also attended by various state authorities as well as the archbishop of Poznan and president of the Episcopal Conference, Stanislaw Gadecki, Cardinal Stanislaw Rylko, president of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, and Cardinal Kazimierz Nycz, archbishop of Warsaw, Msgr. Josef Clemens, secretary of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, Msgr. Artur Grzegorz Mizinski and Msgr. Damian Andrzej Musus, coordinators of the trip to Poland of the WYD, with a number of Polish bishops and a group of faithful.

The Pope will then transfer to Wawel, the walled architectural complex consisting of the royal palace, the cathedral, the vicariate and the servants' quarters, situated on the left bank of the river Vistula and characterised by various architectural styles, including Romanesque, gothic, Renaissance and baroque. It was the seat of the Polish monarchy for five centuries (1038 to 1596) up to the transfer of the capital from Krakow to Warsaw. The castle, one of the finest examples of European Renaissance architecture with Romanesque and gothic elements, conserves a number of artworks including Leonardo da Vinci's "Lady with an Ermine".

In the courtyard at Wawel, where he will be received by president Duda and his wife, the Pope will give his first address on Polish soil before 800 people representing civil society and the diplomatic corps in Poland. He will

then transfer to the cathedral of Sts. Stanislaus and Wenceslas, adjacent to the royal castle, where he will meet with Polish bishops, after which he will retire to the archbishop's residence in Krakow.
