After a long time of planning and expectation, World Youth Day 2008 is over. I was privileged enough to be asked to lead ACU National’s “East Timor Group”. Together with 3 students from East Timor, our culturally and linguistically diverse group of students was aimed at increasing understanding and awareness of the social justice work still left to be done in East Timor.

Reflecting together on the World Youth Day theme -

“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you will be my witnesses” (Acts 1:8)

– we felt that the Holy Spirit had indeed been with us. Like so many pilgrims, we came from different nations, different tribes yet through the simple rituals of eating together, walking together and praying together we became, or rather discovered that we were a part of, one family. We discovered that music, tears and heartfelt prayers are a universal language. Our group’s maxim became “peregrinasaun haksolok hamutuk” (“pilgrims happy together” in Tetun, language of East Timor).

World Youth Day taught me that we are all connected. Our differences enrich our lives but it is our similarities that unite and bind us. This is enabling. This is a gift. Let us take time this week to open ourselves to this gift. The wonders of the world around us may open up and we may see our lives and the lives of those around us with new eyes.