



The Holy See

BENEDICT XVI

GENERAL AUDIENCE

Castel Gandolfo

Wednesday, 24 August 2011

[\[Video\]](#)

Apostolic Journey to Madrid

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today I would like to return my thoughts and my heart to the extraordinary days I spent in Madrid for the 26th World Youth Day. As you know it was a stirring ecclesial event; about two million young people from all the continents lived with joy an overwhelming experience of brotherhood, of encounter with the Lord, of sharing and of growth in faith: a true cascade of light. I thank God for this precious gift, which promises hope for the Church's future: young people with a strong and sincere desire to root their life in Christ, to keep firm in faith, to walk together in the Church. My thanks to all who worked generously for this Day: the Cardinal Archbishop of Madrid, his Auxiliaries, the other Bishops of Spain and of other parts of the world, the Pontifical Council for the Laity, the priests, men and women religious and lay people.

I renew my gratitude to the Spanish authorities, to the institutions and associations, to the volunteers and to all who offered the support of their prayers. I cannot forget the warm welcome I received from Their Majesties the King and Queen of Spain, as well as from the entire country.

I cannot of course describe in a few words the most intense moments that we experienced. I am thinking of the unrestrained enthusiasm with which the young people received me on the first day in the Plaza de Cibeles, of their words of expectation, their strong desire to turn to the deepest

truth and to be rooted in it, that truth which God has granted us to know in Christ.

At the imposing Monastery of El Escorial, rich in history, spirituality and culture, I met the young women religious and young university professors. I reminded the former, the young women religious, of the beauty of their vocation lived with fidelity and of the importance of their apostolic service and their prophetic witness. Moreover, the impression of their enthusiasm, of their young faith, full of courage for the future and of the readiness to serve humanity in this way lives on within me.

I reminded the professors that they should be true formators of the new generations, guiding them in their search for truth not only with words but also with their life, knowing that the Truth is Christ himself. In finding Christ we find the truth. In the evening, during the celebration of the Way of the Cross, a variegated multitude of young people relived the scenes of Christ's passion and death with intense involvement: the Cross of Christ gives far more than it demands; it gives everything because it leads us to God.

The following day there was Holy Mass with the seminarians in the Cathedral of de la Almudena in Madrid, young men who want to be rooted in Christ in order some day to make him present as his ministers. I hope that vocations to the priesthood will increase! Among those present, more than a few had heard the Lord's call precisely during previous Youth Days; I am sure that in Madrid too the Lord knocked at the door of the heart of many young men so that they might follow him generously in the priestly ministry or in the religious life.

The visit to a Centre for differently abled young people permitted me to see the great respect and love that is felt for every person and it gave me the opportunity to thank the thousands of volunteers who silently bear witness to the Gospel of charity and life. The Prayer Vigil in the evening and the great concluding Eucharistic celebration the following day were two very intense moments: in the evening a multitude of young people celebrating, not in the least discouraged by the wind and rain, knelt in silent adoration of Christ present in the Eucharist, to praise him, to thank him, to ask him for help and enlightenment; and then, on Sunday, the young people expressed their exuberance and joy in celebrating the Lord in the word and in the Eucharist, to insert themselves increasingly in him and to strengthen their faith and their life as Christians. I met the volunteers at the end in an atmosphere of enthusiasm and thanked them for their generosity and, with the Farewell Ceremony, I left the country bearing these days in my heart as a great gift.

Dear friends, the Madrid Meeting was a wonderful expression of faith for Spain and for the world first of all. For the multitude of youth, who came from every corner of the earth it was a special opportunity to reflect, to take part in dialogue, to exchange positive experiences with each other and above all, to pray together and renew the commitment to root their own life in Christ, a faithful Friend.

I am sure that they are returning home firmly resolved to be the leaven in the mass, bringing the hope that is born from faith. For my part, I continue to accompany them with my prayers, so that they will be faithful to the commitments they have taken on. I entrust the fruits of this Day to the motherly intercession of Mary.

And I would now like to announce the themes of the upcoming World Youth Days. The theme for the Day next year, which will be celebrated in the individual dioceses will be: "Rejoice in the Lord always", from the Letter to the Philippians (4:4); whereas for the World Youth Day 2013 in Rio de Janeiro, the theme will be Jesus' mandate: "Go and make disciples of all nations!" (cf. Mt 28: 19). From this moment I entrust the preparation for these very important events to the prayers of all. Many thanks.

To special groups:

I warmly greet all the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors here today. Having just returned from Madrid, I greet affectionately the young people present, especially those who were with me for the unforgettable celebration of World Youth Day. I also welcome those present from Australia, Indonesia, Japan, Singapore and the United States. May God bless all of you and remain with you for ever!

I greet with affection the Italian-speaking pilgrims, as well as the couples of newlyweds. I ask everyone to devote more and more time to Christian formation, in order to be faithful disciples of Christ, the Way, the Truth and the Life. Now let us chant the *Pater Noster* in Latin. Thank you all and have a good day.

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At the end of the Audience, the Holy Father greeted the many faithful present in the square in front of the Papal Residence and said:

Dear friends, good morning! I wish you a good day, joy, happy holidays and also a safe return to work. May the Lord always be with you so that you may feel his presence and the light that comes from faith. My very best wishes to you all! May the Lord always bless you! I now impart the Apostolic Blessing to you all.

