



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO CARDINAL STANISŁAW RYŁKO
ON THE OCCASION OF THE 10TH INTERNATIONAL YOUTH FORUM**

*To my Venerable Brother
Cardinal Stanisław Ryłko
President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity*

I am pleased to send my cordial greeting to you, to the collaborators of the [Pontifical Council for the Laity](#) and to all who are taking part in the 10th International *Forum* for Youth, which is being held this week at Rocca di Papa on the theme "*Learning to Love*". With special affection I address the young delegates of the Bishops' Conferences and of various Movements, Associations and International Communities, who come from the five continents. I extend my thoughts to the authoritative relators who are contributing their competence and their experience to the meeting.

"Learning to Love": this theme is central to the faith and to Christian life and I am delighted that you have the opportunity to examine it together. As you know, the starting point of any reflection on love is the very mystery of God, for the heart of the Christian revelation is this: *Deus caritas est*. Christ in his Passion, in the total gift of himself, has revealed to us the Face of the God who is Love.

Contemplation of the mystery of the Trinity leads us into this mystery of eternal Love, which is fundamental for us. The first pages of the Bible say, in fact, that "God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him"; that is, "male and female he created them" (Gn 1: 27). For the very reason that God is love and man is his image we understand the person's profound identity, his vocation to love. Human beings are made for love; their lives are completely fulfilled only if they are lived in love. Thus, after many years of searching, St Thérèse of the Child Jesus came to understand the meaning of her life: "My vocation is Love!" (*Manuscript B*, folio 3).

I urge the young people present at this *Forum* to put their whole heart into seeking their vocation to love, as people and as baptized people. This is the key to their entire existence. They can therefore invest all their energy in drawing close to this goal, day after day, sustained by the Word of God and by the Sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist.

The vocation to love takes different forms according to the state of life. In this [Year for Priests](#), I wish to recall the words of the holy Curé d'Ars: "the priesthood is the love of Jesus' Heart". In the following of Jesus, priests give their lives so that the faithful may live by the love of Christ. Called by God to give themselves entirely to him with an undivided heart, consecrated people in celibacy are also an eloquent sign of God's love for the world and of the vocation to love God above all else.

I would also like to encourage the young delegates to discover the greatness and beauty of Marriage: the relationship between the man and the woman reflects divine love in a quite special way; therefore the conjugal bond acquires an immense dignity. Through the Sacrament of Marriage the spouses are united to God and with their relationship express the love of Christ who gave his life for the salvation of the world. In a cultural context in which many people consider Marriage as a temporary contract that may be violated, it is vitally important to understand that true love is faithful, it is the definitive gift of self. Since Christ consecrates the love of Christian spouses and is committed to and with them, this fidelity is not only possible but is the way by which to enter into ever greater charity. Thus, in the daily life of the couple and of the family, the spouses learn to love as Christ loves. To measure up to this vocation a serious educational process is necessary and this *Forum* also fits into this perspective.

These days of formation through encounter, listening to conferences and common prayer, must also be an encouragement to all the young delegates to make themselves witnesses among their peers of what they have seen and heard. It is a real responsibility. The Church is counting on them because they have an important role to carry out in the evangelization of their country's young people to ensure that they respond with joy and faithfulness to Christ's commandment: "that you love one another as I have loved you" (Jn 15: 12).

Inviting the young people to persevere on the path of charity in the following of Christ, I make an appointment with them for next Sunday, in St Peter's Square, where the [solemn celebration of Palm Sunday](#) and the [25th World Youth Day](#) will take place.

This year the theme for reflection is: "*Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?*" (Mk 10: 17). Jesus answers this question that was put to him by a rich young man with a loving gaze and an invitation to make the total gift of himself, for love of God. May this encounter contribute to the generous response of every delegate to the call and gifts of the Lord!

To this end, I assure all the young people of my prayer and warmly send a special Apostolic

Blessing to you, Venerable Brother, and to all the participants in the International *Forum*.

From the Vatican, 20 March 2010

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