



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO H.E. MSGR. JULIÁN BARRIO BARRIO
ARCHBISHOP OF SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA (SPAIN)
ON THE OCCASION OF THE BEGINNING
OF THE COMPOSTELA YEAR 2010**

*To Archbishop Julián Barrio Barrio
of Santiago de Compostela*

For the opening of the Holy Door which inaugurates the Jubilee of Santiago de Compostela of 2010, I extend a cordial greeting to you, Your Excellency, and to the participants in this important ceremony, as well as to the pastors and faithful of this particular Church which by its immemorial bond with the Apostle James is deeply rooted in the Gospel of Christ, offering this spiritual treasure to his children and to the pilgrims who come from Galicia, from other parts of Spain, from Europe and from the furthest corners of the world.

This solemn act opens a special season of grace and forgiveness, the season of the "Great Pardon", as it is called by tradition. It is a special opportunity for believers to reflect on their genuine vocation to holiness of life, to be imbued with the word of God that enlightens and challenges them and to recognize Christ who comes to meet them, accompanies them in the vicissitudes of their journey in the world and gives himself to them personally, especially in the Eucharist. However, even those who have no faith or who perhaps have let it wither, will have a special opportunity to receive the gift given by "him who enlightens all men that they may at length have life" (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 16).

Santiago de Compostela has long been distinguished as a very important destination for pilgrims, whose steps have marked out a Way which is called after the Apostle to whose tomb people come especially from the most diverse regions of Europe to renew and strengthen their faith. It is a Way sown with so many demonstrations of fervour, repentance, hospitality, art and culture which speak to us eloquently of the spiritual roots of the Old Continent.

The motto of this new Compostelian Jubilee Year, "On Pilgrimage Towards the Light", and the Pastoral Letter for the occasion, "Pilgrims of Faith and Witnesses of the Risen Christ", faithfully follow this tradition and present it anew to the men and women of today as a call for evangelization, recalling the essentially pilgrim character of the Church and of being Christians in this world (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, n. 6, 48-50). On the Way, new horizons are contemplated that prompt one to reflect on the narrowness of one's own life and the immensity that the human being has within him and outside him, preparing him to go in search of what his heart truly yearns for. Open to wonder and to transcendence, the pilgrim lets himself be instructed by the word of God, and in this way cleanses his faith from unfounded attachments and fears. This is what the Risen Lord did with the disciples who, dazed and downhearted, were on their way to Emmaus. When he added to his words the gesture of breaking the bread, the disciples' "eyes were opened" (Lk 24: 31) and they recognized him whom they thought had been overcome by death.

So they had a personal encounter with Christ, who lives for ever and is part of their lives. At that moment, their first and most ardent wish was to proclaim and tell the others what had happened (cf. Lk 24: 35).

I fervently ask the Lord to accompany the pilgrims, to make himself known and to enter their hearts, "so that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (Jn 10: 10). This is the true objective, grace, which merely walking the Way alone cannot enable one to achieve and which leads the pilgrim to become a witness to others of the fact that Christ lives and is our eternal hope of salvation. In this Archdiocese, together with many other ecclesial organizations, many pastoral projects have been implemented to contribute to reaching this essential goal of the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela, of a spiritual character, although in some cases there is a tendency to ignore or distort it.

In this Holy Year, in tune with the *Year for Priests*, a decisive role must be played by priests, whose spirit of acceptance and dedication to the faithful and to pilgrims must be especially generous. Pilgrims themselves, they are called to serve their brothers and sisters, offering them the life of God, as men of the divine word and of sacred things (cf. *To The International Retreat for Priests in Ars*, 28 September 2009). I then encourage the priests of this Archdiocese, as well as those who will join them during this Jubilee and those of the dioceses through which the Way passes, to do their utmost in the administration of the sacraments of penance and of the Eucharist, since the most sought-after and characteristic benefit of the Holy Year is the Pardon and the encounter with the living Christ.

In this circumstance, I express my special closeness to the pilgrims who have come and who will continue to come to Santiago. I ask them to treasure the evocative experiences of faith, charity and brotherhood that they meet with their journey, to experience the Way especially inwardly, letting themselves be challenged by the call that the Lord makes to each one of them. Thus they will be able to say joyfully and firmly at the Portico of Glory: "I believe". I ask them also not to

forget in their prayers those who could not accompany them, their families and friends, the sick and the needy, emigrants, people with a wavering faith and the People of God with their Pastors.

I cordially thank the Archdiocese of Santiago as well as the Authorities and the other collaborators, for their efforts in preparing this Jubilee of Compostela, and also the volunteers and all those who are prepared to contribute to its smooth functioning. I entrust the spiritual and pastoral fruits of this Holy Year to our Mother in Heaven, the Pilgrim Virgin, to the Apostle James, the "friend of the Lord", and at the same time I impart the Apostolic Blessing to all with affection.

From the Vatican, 19 December 2009

BENEDICT XVI

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