



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY OF POPE BENEDICT XVI
TO PORTUGAL ON THE OCCASION OF THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE BEATIFICATION OF JACINTA AND FRANCISCO,
YOUNG SHEPHERDS OF FÁTIMA

HOLY MASS

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

Terreiro do Paço of Lisbon

Tuesday, 11 May 2010

(Video)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Dear Young Friends,

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations ... teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age” (*Mt 28:19-20*). These words of the risen Christ take on a particular significance in this city of Lisbon, from which generations upon generations of Christians – bishops, priests, consecrated and lay persons, men and women, young and not so young – have journeyed forth in great numbers in obedience to the Lord’s call, armed simply with the certainty that he had entrusted to them: “I am with you always”. Portugal has gained a glorious place among the nations for the service rendered to the spreading of the faith: in all five continents there are local churches that owe their origin to Portuguese missionary activity.

In times past, your departure in search of other peoples neither impeded nor severed your bonds with what you were and what you believed. On the contrary, with Christian wisdom you succeeded in transplanting experiences and characteristic elements, opening yourselves up to the contribution of others so as to be yourselves, through an apparent weakness which is actually strength. Today, as you play your part in building up the European Community, you offer the

contribution of your cultural and religious identity. Indeed, just as Jesus Christ joined the disciples on the road to Emmaus, so today he walks with us in accordance with his promise: "I am with you always, to the close of the age." We too have a real and personal experience of the risen Lord, even if it differs from that of the Apostles. The distance of centuries is overcome and the risen Lord presents himself alive and at work, acting through us, in the Church and the world of today. This is our great joy. In the living river of ecclesial Tradition, Christ is not two thousand years distant from us, but is really present among us: he gives us the Truth and he gives us the light which is our life and helps us find the path towards the future.

Present in his word, present in the assembly of the people of God with its Pastors, and pre-eminently present in the sacrament of his Body and Blood, Jesus is here with us. I greet the Cardinal Patriarch of Lisbon, whom I thank for the affectionate words that he addressed to me at the start of the celebration, in the name of his community that has made me so welcome. I in turn embrace the almost two million sons and daughters who form that community. To all of you here present – dear brother bishops and priests, beloved consecrated women and men and members of the lay faithful, dear families and young people, baptized and catechumens – I address my fraternal and friendly greeting, which I extend to those who are united with us through radio and television. I warmly thank the President of the Republic for his presence, as well as the other authorities, especially the Mayor of Lisbon, who has been good enough to confer upon me the keys of the city.

Lisbon – friend, port and shelter for the great hopes that were placed in you by those who set off from here, hopes that were cherished by those who visited you – today I wish to make use of these keys that you have given me so that you may be able to base your human hopes upon divine Hope. In the reading that has just been proclaimed, taken from the First Letter of Saint Peter, we heard: "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and he who believes in him will not be put to shame". And the Apostle explains: Draw near to the Lord, "that living stone, rejected by men but in God's sight chosen and precious" (*1 Pet 2:6,4*). Brothers and sisters, those who believe in Jesus will not be put to shame: he is the Word of God, who can neither deceive nor be deceived, and this Word is attested by a "great multitude which no man could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues," a multitude pictured by the author of the Apocalypse "clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands" (*Rev 7:9*). This countless multitude includes not only Saints Verissimus, Maxima and Julia, martyred here during the persecution of Diocletian, Saint Vincent, deacon and martyr, the principal patron of the Patriarchate, Saint Anthony and Saint John of Brito who set off from here to sow God's good seed in other lands and among other peoples, and Saint Nuno of Santa Maria, whom I added to the ranks of the Saints just over a year ago. It is formed of the "servants of our God" from all times and places, on whose forehead the sign of the cross has been inscribed with "the seal of the living God" (*Rev 7:2*), that is to say, with the Holy Spirit. I am referring to the initial rite administered to each one of us in the sacrament of Baptism, through which the Church gives birth to the "saints".

We know that she also has quarrelsome and even rebellious sons and daughters, but it is in the saints that the Church recognizes her most characteristic features, it is in them that she tastes her deepest joy. They all share the desire to incarnate the Gospel in their own lives, under the inspiration of the eternal animator of God's People – the Holy Spirit. Focussing her attention upon her own saints, this local Church has rightly concluded that today's pastoral priority is to make each Christian man and woman a radiant presence of the Gospel perspective in the midst of the world, in the family, in culture, in the economy, in politics. Often we are anxiously preoccupied with the social, cultural and political consequences of the faith, taking for granted that faith is present, which unfortunately is less and less realistic. Perhaps we have placed an excessive trust in ecclesial structures and programmes, in the distribution of powers and functions; but what will happen if salt loses its flavour?

In order for this not to happen, it is necessary to proclaim anew with vigour and joy the event of the death and resurrection of Christ, the heart of Christianity, the fulcrum and mainstay of our faith, the firm lever of our certainties, the strong wind that sweeps away all fear and indecision, all doubt and human calculation. The resurrection of Christ assures us that no adverse power will ever be able to destroy the Church. Therefore our faith is well-founded, but this faith needs to come alive in each one of us. A vast effort at every level is required if every Christian is to be transformed into a witness capable of rendering account to all and at all times of the hope that inspires him (cf. *1 Pet* 3:15): only Christ can fully satisfy the profound longings of every human heart and give answers to its most pressing questions concerning suffering, injustice and evil, concerning death and the life hereafter.

Dear brothers and sisters, dear young friends, Christ is always with us and always walks with his Church, accompanies her and guards her, as he has told us: "I am with you always, to the close of the age" (*Mt* 28:20). Never doubt his presence! Always seek the Lord Jesus, grow in friendship with him, receive him in communion. Learn to listen to his word and also to recognize him in the poor. Live your lives with joy and enthusiasm, sure of his presence and of his unconditional, generous friendship, faithful even to death on the cross. Bear witness to all of the joy that his strong yet gentle presence evokes, starting with your contemporaries. Tell them that it is beautiful to be a friend of Jesus and that it is well worth following him. With your enthusiasm, demonstrate that, among all the different ways of life that the world today seems to offer us – apparently all on the same level – the only way in which we find the true meaning of life and hence true and lasting joy, is by following Jesus.

Seek daily the protection of Mary, Mother of the Lord and mirror of all holiness. She, the all-holy one, will help you to be faithful disciples of her Son Jesus Christ.