



The Holy See

***LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE ARCHBISHOP OF SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA
ON THE OCCASION OF THE SOLEMN CLOSURE
OF THE HOLY YEAR OF COMPOSTELA 2010***

*To my Venerable Brother
Metropolitan Archbishop JULIÁN BARRIO BARRIO
of Santiago de Compostela*

On the occasion of the solemn closure of the Holy Year of Compostela 2010, I think back with emotion to the House of St James which I recently visited with profound inner joy. I would like to join in thanksgiving to God for the gifts that his goodness has poured out in these recent months upon the multitude of people who went on pilgrimage to this holy place with a living faith, renewing their firm adherence to the Message passed on by the Apostles and living in a spirit of conversion the encounter with the mercy and love of Jesus Christ. In greeting with affection the Pastors, the religious, the seminarians and the faithful gathered on that occasion, recalling the unforgettable moments we experienced by the Tomb of the Apostle, a Protomartyr, I would like to address a word of encouragement to them, so that the fruits of Christian life and ecclesial renewal gathered in abundance during the Holy Year may spur all who went to Santiago de Compostela to be witnesses of the Risen Christ.

In fact, they have shared their anxieties, hopes and challenges with the brethren whom they met on the way, seeking to listen to God — who speaks to us and dwells in us — in order to come out of themselves and open themselves to others.

Thus they arrived at the Pórtico de la Gloria, where the loving and welcoming majesty of Christ awaited them, in whose light man can find the authentic meaning of his own life and journey for a peaceful and constructive coexistence among peoples. Beneath the serene gaze of the Apostle, they renewed their profession of faith, they intoned their praise and made a humble confession of their sins. The profession of faith was followed by the reception of forgiveness in the sacrament of

Penance and the encounter with the Lord in the Eucharist.

This meeting cannot leave them indifferent. Pilgrims must go home just as the disciples of Emmaus went back to Jerusalem, who had talked with Jesus on the way and recognized him when he broke the bread. Joyful and grateful, they went to the Holy City to tell everyone that Jesus had risen and had appeared to them alive. Thus they became cheerful and trusting messengers of the living Christ, who is a balm for our suffering and the basis of our hope (*cf.* Lk 24:13-35).

Now too, in leaving Compostela after experiencing the love of the Lord who came to meet us, they will want to fulfill the mandate of the Apostle Peter: "In your hearts reverence Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to make a defence to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you" (1 Pt 3:15). This requires the resolution to reinforce our faith increasingly every day, diligently taking part in the mysteries of grace entrusted to the Church and giving an effective and practical example of charity. We will not be credible witnesses of God if we are not faithful collaborators and servants of men. This service in favour of a profound understanding and of a courageous defence of the human being is a requirement of the Gospel and an essential contribution to society through our Christian condition.

With these sentiments, I would now like to address young people in particular, with whom I shall have the joy of being reunited next year in Madrid, for the celebration of the World Youth Day. I ask them to let themselves be called into question by Christ, establishing with him a frank and calm dialogue and also asking themselves: Will the Lord count on me to be his apostle in the world, to be a messenger of his love? May generosity not be lacking in their response, nor that daring which brought St James to follow the Teacher without counting the cost.

I also encourage seminarians to identify ever more with Jesus, who calls them to work in his vineyard (*cf.* Mt 20:3-4). The vocation to the priesthood is a wonderful gift of which it is necessary to be proud, because the world needs people entirely dedicated to making present Jesus Christ, who configure their life and their actions to him, who humbly repeat his words and his gestures every day, to be his reflection in the midst of the flock that has been entrusted to them. This is the effort and also the glory of priests, whom I would like to remind with St Paul that nothing and no one in this world can tear them away from the love of God manifested in Christ (*cf.* Rom 8:39).

Treasuring in my heart the memory of my pleasant stay in Compostela, I ask the Lord to grant that the forgiveness and aspiration to holiness that has germinated in this Holy Year of Compostela may help to make more present, under the guidance of St James, the redeeming word of Jesus Christ in this particular Church and in every place in Spain, and that his light may also be perceived in Europe, as a ceaseless invitation to reinforce its Christian roots and to intensify in this way its commitment to encourage solidarity and the firm defence of human dignity.

I entrust all the sons and daughters of this noble land to the loving protection of the Most Holy

Virgin Mary — to whose heart as Mother, according to a venerable tradition, the Apostle St James commended his suffering and his joy — and I impart to them the Apostolic Blessing as a sign of consolation and constant divine assistance.

From the Vatican, 18 December 2010

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