



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO YOUNG PEOPLE OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF MADRID (SPAIN)
WHO HAD COME TO ROME
TO RECEIVE THE WORLD YOUTH DAY CROSS**

*Paul VI Audience Hall
Monday, 6 April 2009*

Dear Friends,

It gives me great joy to receive such a numerous group at this Audience. You came from Madrid and Spain to receive the Youth Day Cross that will travel through various cities until the World Youth Day in Madrid in 2011. I cordially greet Cardinal Antonio María Rouco Varela, Archbishop of Madrid, who is leading this pilgrimage; the General Coordinator of the Youth Day, his Auxiliary, Bishop César Augusto Franco Martínez and the other Bishops, priests and catechists who have wished to be here. I greet you with special affection, dear young people, who in carrying the Cross profess your faith in the One who loves you infinitely, the Lord Jesus, whose Paschal Mystery we shall be celebrating in these [Holy Days](#). As I said on another occasion, "Faith, in its own way, needs to see and to touch.

The encounter with the World Youth Day Cross, which is touched and carried, becomes an interior encounter with the One who died for us on the Cross. The encounter with the Cross awakens within young people the remembrance of the God who chose to become man and to suffer with us" ([Address to the Roman Curia for the exchange of Christmas Greetings](#), 22 December 2008). I am glad to know that you will carry this cross that you have received in procession on Good Friday through the streets of Madrid so that it may be acclaimed and venerated.

I therefore encourage you to discover in the Cross the infinite measure of Christ's love, so as to be able to say, like St Paul: "I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me (Gal 2: 20). Yes, dear young people, Christ gave himself for each one of you and loves you in a

unique and personal way. Respond to Christ's love by lovingly offering him your life. In this way, the preparation for [World Youth Day](#), on which you have started working with great hope and dedication, will be rewarded with the fruit that these Days claim to bear: the renewal and strengthening of the experience of encountering Christ who died and rose for us.

Follow in Christ's footsteps! He is your destination, your way and also your reward. In the theme you have chosen for the World Youth Day, the Apostle Paul invites you to go on your way "rooted and built up in Jesus Christ, firm in the faith" (cf. Col 2: 7). Life is undoubtedly a journey. Yet it is not an uncertain journey without a precise destination; on the contrary, it leads to Christ, the goal of human life and history. On this journey you will succeed in encountering the One who, by giving up his life for love, opens to you the door to eternal life. I therefore ask you to educate yourselves in the faith that gives meaning to your life and to strengthen your convictions so that you may stand firm in the face of the difficulties of daily life. I also urge you, on your journey towards Christ, to attract your young friends, your fellow students and co-workers, in such a way that they too may know and profess him as the Lord of their life. In order to do this, let the power from on High that is within you, the Holy Spirit, express himself with his immense attraction. Young people today need to discover the new life that comes from God, to be satiated by the truth, whose source is Christ who died and has risen, which the Church received as a treasure for all men.

Dear young people, this period of preparation for the Day in Madrid is an extraordinary occasion also to experience the grace of belonging to the Church, the Body of Christ. [World Youth Day](#) reveals the dynamism of the Church and her eternal youth. Whoever loves Christ loves the Church with the same passion because she enables us to live in a close relationship with the Lord. Therefore cultivate initiatives that enable young people to feel as though they are members of the Church in full communion with their Pastors and with the Successor of Peter. Pray as a community, opening the doors of your parishes, associations and movements so that all may feel at home in the Church, where they are loved with God's own love. Celebrate and live your faith with immense joy. This is the gift of the Spirit. Thus your heart and those of your friends will be prepared to celebrate the great festival which is the [World Youth Day](#), and we shall all live a new epiphany of the Church's youth.

In these most beautiful days of [Holy Week](#) which we began yesterday, I encourage you to contemplate Christ in the mysteries of his Passion, death and Resurrection. In them you will find what surpasses any wisdom and knowledge: God's love manifested in Christ. Learn from him, who came "not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mk 10: 45). This is the style of Christ's love, marked with the sign of the glorious Cross on which Christ was raised up in sight of all, with open heart, so that the world might look and see, through his perfect humanity, the love that saves us. The Cross thus becomes the very sign of life, because on it Christ defeated sin and death through the total gift of himself. For this reason we must embrace and adore the Lord's Cross, make it our own, accept its weight like the Cyrene, to participate in the one reality that can redeem all humanity (cf. Col 1: 24). In Baptism you were marked with the Cross of Christ

and you now belong to him totally. Become ever more worthy of him and never be ashamed of this supreme sign of love.

With this profoundly Christian attitude you will carry on with the work of preparation for the World Youth Day successfully and productively. For, as St Paul says, we can do everything through the One who gives us strength (cf. Phil 4: 13) and in the Crucified Christ God's power and wisdom are manifested in us (cf. 1 Cor 1: 24). Let yourselves be imbued with this power and wisdom. Communicate it to others and, under the protection of the Most Holy Virgin Mary, prepare with dedication and joy for the World Youth Day that will make Madrid a place radiant with faith and life, where young people from across the world will celebrate Christ with enthusiasm.

Bring my affectionate greeting back to your families and to the friends and companions who were unable to come here today, whom I bless warmly.

Happy Easter! Thank you.

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