



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA AND BARCELONA

(NOVEMBER 6-7, 2010)

**INTERVIEW OF THE HOLY FATHER BENEDICT XVI
WITH THE JOURNALISTS
DURING THE FLIGHT TO SPAIN**

Papal Flight

Saturday, 6 November 2010

Fr. Lombardi: *Your Holiness, in Your Message to the recent Second World Congress on Pilgrimages and Shrines that was held in Santiago de Compostela, you said that you were living your Pontificate “with the sentiments of a pilgrim”. And your coat-of-arms also contains the pilgrim's cockle-shell. Would you like to say something about the perspective of this pilgrimage in your personal life and in your spirituality too and about the feelings with which you are going to Santiago as a pilgrim?*

The Holy Father: Good morning! I could say that going on pilgrimage is also part of my biography — Marktl, Tittmoning, Aschau, Traunstein, Munich, Freiburg, Bonn, Münster, Tübingen, Regensburg, Munich, Rome — but perhaps this is an external aspect. However, you have made me think of the instability of this life, of being on a journey.... Of course, someone might criticize pilgrimages saying: “God is everywhere, there is no need to go to another place. But it is also true that faith, in accordance with its essence, is 'being a pilgrim’”.

The Letter to the Hebrews shows what faith is in the figure of Abraham who leaves his land and lives his whole life as a pilgrim bound for the future. And this Abrahamic movement is perpetrated in the act of faith, above all it means being a pilgrim inwardly, but it must also be expressed outwardly. Sometimes it means emerging from one's daily routine, from the practical world, from

utilitarianism, emerging only to be really on the way towards transcendence; to transcend oneself, to transcend daily life and thus also to find a new freedom, a time of interior rethinking, of self identification, of seeing the Other, God, and thus it is also and always a pilgrimage. It is not only coming out of oneself towards something greater, but is also travelling together. The pilgrimage unites: together we journey towards the other and thus we discover each other. It suffices to say that the ways of St James were an important element in the formation of the spiritual unity of the European Continent. It was here, on pilgrimage, that people found one another, they found their common European identity, and today too this movement is reborn, this need to be spiritually and physically in movement in order to find one another and thus also silence, freedom, renewal and to discover God.

Fr. Lombardi: *And now let us shift our gaze to Barcelona. What significance can the consecration of a church like the Sagrada Família have at the beginning of the 21st century? And is there some specific aspect of Gaudí's vision that has struck you in particular?*

The Holy Father: In fact this cathedral itself is also a sign for our time. In Gaudí's vision moreover I perceive three elements above all.

The first, is this synthesis between continuity and newness, tradition and creativity. Gaudí had the courage to insert himself into the great tradition of cathedrals, to contribute something new in his century — with a totally new vision — to this reality: the cathedral as a place of the encounter between God and man, in great solemnity; and do this with courage in continuity with tradition but with a new creativity, one that renews tradition. Thus he shows the humanity of history and the progress of history, it is a beautiful thing.

Secondly, Gaudí wanted this trinomial: a book of nature, a book of Scripture, a book of the Liturgy. And this synthesis is of great importance precisely today. In the Liturgy, Scripture becomes present, it becomes a reality today. It is no longer a Scripture of 2,000 years ago, but should be celebrated and brought into being, And in the celebration of Scripture creation speaks, creation speaks and finds its true response because, as St Paul tells us, the creature suffers and instead of being destroyed, despised it waits for the children of God, that is, those who see it in God's light. And so — I think — this synthesis between the sense of creation, Scripture and adoration is actually a very important message for today.

And lastly — the third point — this cathedral was born from the typical devotion of the 19th century: St Joseph, the Holy Family of Nazareth, the mystery of Nazareth. Yet this devotion of the past, one could say, is itself very up to date because the problem of the family, of the renewal of the family as a fundamental cell of society, is the great theme today and points out to us where we can go, in both the construction of society and in the unity between faith and life, between religion and society. Family is the fundamental theme expressed here; it says that God made himself a son in a family and calls us to build the family and experience family life.

Fr. Lombardi: *Gaudí and the Sagrada Família effectively represent the dual concept: faith-art. How can faith rediscover its place today in the world of art and culture? Is this one of the important themes of your Pontificate?*

The Holy Father: It is like this. You know that I place great emphasis on the relationship between faith and reason, that faith, and Christian faith, has its identity only in openness to reason and that reason becomes itself if it transcends itself towards faith. But the relationship between faith and art is equally important because truth, the aim or goal of reason, is expressed in beauty and in beauty becomes itself, is proven to be truth. Therefore, wherever there is truth beauty must be born, wherever human beings are fulfilled in a correct and good way, they express themselves in beauty. The relationship between truth and beauty is inseparable and therefore we need beauty.

In the Church from the outset and also in the great modesty and poverty of the time of persecution, art, painting, the expression of God's salvation in earthly images, singing and then building too, are all constitutive for the Church and remains constitutive for ever.

The Church was consequently a mother to art for centuries and centuries: the great treasure of Western art — music, architecture and painting — was born from faith within the Church. Today there is a certain “dissidence” but this is bad for both art and faith. An art that lost the root of transcendence would not be oriented to God: it would be a halved art, it would lose its living root; and a faith that had art only in the past would no longer be faith in the present; and today it must be expressed anew as truth that is always present.

Therefore dialogue or the encounter - I would say both - of art and faith are inscribed in the deepest essence of faith; we must do our utmost to see that today too faith is expressed in authentic art, like Gaudí's, in continuity and in innovation, and to prevent art from losing its contact with faith.

Fr. Lombardi: *In recent months the new Dicastery for the “New Evangelization” was founded. And many People wondered whether Spain, with the development of secularization and the rapid dwindling of religious practice, might be one of the countries you were thinking of as an objective for this new Dicastery, or even whether it might be the principle objective. This is our question.*

The Holy Father: With this Dicastery I had in mind the whole world in itself because the newness of thought, the difficulty of thinking in Scriptural or theological concepts is universal; but naturally it has a centre a focal point and this is the Western world with its centralism, its laicity and the continuity of faith that must seek to renew itself in order to be faith today and to respond to the challenge of laicity. In the West all the important countries have their own way of living this problem: for example, consider the Visits to France, to the Czech Republic and to the United Kingdom where the same problem is everywhere present in a specific way for each nation, for each history, and this also applies essentially to Spain. Spain has always been “a native” an

original country of faith. Just think that the rebirth of Catholicism in the modern era was brought about above all thanks to Spain; figures such as St Ignatius of Loyola, St Teresa of Avila and St John of Avila are figures who really renewed Catholicism, who formed the features of modern Catholicism. Yet it is likewise true that a laicity, an anticlericalism, a strong and aggressive secularism developed in Spain, as we saw precisely in the 1930s. And this dispute, this clash between faith and modernity — both very intense — has also arisen once again in Spain today: therefore for the future of faith and of encounter, not conflict, but the encounter of faith and laicity also has a central point in Spanish culture itself. In this regard I thought of all the important countries of the West, but especially also of Spain.

Fr. Lombardi: *With the journey to Madrid next year for the World Youth Day you will have made three visits to Spain, something that has not happened for any other country. Why should there be this privilege? Is it a sign of love or of special concern?*

The Holy Father: Of course it is a sign of love. It could be said that it is by chance that I should come to Spain three times. The first time it was for the great international meeting of families in Valencia; how could the Pope be absent when the families of the world are meeting? Next year the World Youth Day will take place in Madrid and the Pope cannot miss this occasion. And lastly, we have the Holy Year of St James, we have the consecration of the Cathedral of the Sagrada Família in Barcelona after more than 100 years of work on it, how could the Pope not come? In themselves, therefore, these events are challenges, as it were a need to go there, but the fact that so many occasions are concentrated in Spain itself also shows that it really is a country full of dynamism, full of the power of faith and faith responds to the challenges that are also present in Spain; therefore; let us say chance has caused me to come but this chance shows a far more profound, reality the power of faith and the force of the challenge to faith.

Fr. Lombardi: *And now would you like to say anything else to conclude our meeting? Is there a special message that with this Journey you are hoping to bring to Spain and to the contemporary world?*

The Holy Father: I would say that this Journey has two themes. It has the theme of pilgrimage, of being on a journey, and it has the theme of beauty, of the expression of truth in beauty, of the continuity between tradition and renewal. To my mind these two themes of the journey are also a message: to be on a journey, not to lose the way of faith, to seek the beauty of faith, the newness and the tradition of faith that can be expressed and meet in modern beauty, with the world of today. Many thanks.

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