



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO MADRID
ON THE OCCASION OF THE 26th WORLD YOUTH DAY
18-21 AUGUST 2011

VISIT TO THE SAN JOSÉ FOUNDATION

GREETING OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

Madrid

Saturday, 20 August 2011

[Video]

Your Eminence,

Dear Brother Bishops,

Dear Priests and Religious of the Hospitaller Order of Saint John of God,

Distinguished Authorities,

Dear Young People, Family Members and Volunteers,

I thank you most sincerely for your kind greeting and heartfelt welcome.

This evening, just before the Prayer Vigil with the young people from throughout the world gathered in Madrid for [this World Youth Day](#), we have this chance to spend time together as a way of showing the Pope's closeness and esteem for each of you, for your families and for all those who help and care for you in this Foundation of Saint Joseph's Institute.

Youth, as I have said more than once, is the age when life discloses itself to us with all its rich possibilities, inspiring us to seek the lofty goals which give it meaning. So when suffering appears on the horizon of a young life, we are shaken; perhaps we ask ourselves: "Can life still be something grand, even when suffering unexpectedly enters it?" In my Encyclical on Christian

Hope, I observed that “the true measure of humanity is essentially determined in relationship to suffering and to the sufferer ... A society unable to accept its suffering members and incapable of helping to share their suffering and to bear it inwardly through ‘com-passion’ is a cruel and inhuman society” (*Spe Salvi*, 38). These words reflect a long tradition of humanity which arises from Christ’s own self-offering on the Cross for us and for our redemption. Jesus and, in his footsteps, his Sorrowful Mother and the saints, are witnesses who shows us how to experience the tragedy of suffering for our own good and for the salvation of the world.

These witnesses speak to us, first and foremost, of the dignity of all human life, created in the image of God. No suffering can efface this divine image imprinted in the depths of our humanity. But there is more: because the Son of God wanted freely to embrace suffering and death, we are also capable of seeing God’s image in the face of those who suffer. This preferential love of the Lord for the suffering helps us to see others more clearly and to give them, above and beyond their material demands, the look of love which they need. But this can only happen as the fruit of a personal encounter with Christ. You yourselves – as religious, family members, health care professionals and volunteers who daily live and work with these young people – know this well. Your lives and your committed service proclaim the greatness to which every human being is called: to show compassion and loving concern to the suffering, just as God himself did. In your noble work we hear an echo of the words found in the Gospel: “just as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me” (*Mt 25:40*).

At the same time, you are also witnesses of the immense goodness which the lives of these young people represent for those who love them, and for humanity as a whole. In a mysterious yet real way, their presence awakens in our often hardened hearts a tenderness which opens us to salvation. The lives of these young people surely touch human hearts and for that reason we are grateful to the Lord for having known them.

Dear friends, our society, which all too often questions the inestimable value of life, of every life, needs you: in a decisive way you help to build the civilization of love. What is more, you play a leading role in that civilization. As sons and daughters of the Church, you offer the Lord your lives, with all their ups and downs, cooperating with him and somehow becoming “part of the treasury of compassion so greatly needed by the human race” (*Spe Salvi*, 40).

With great affection, and through the intercession of Saint Joseph, Saint John of God and Saint Benito Menni, I commend you to God our Lord: may he be your strength and your reward. As a pledge of his love, I cordially impart to you, and to your families and friends, my Apostolic Blessing. Thank you very much.

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