



The Holy See

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

PRAYER VIGIL WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

Cuatro Vientos Air Base, Madrid
Saturday, 20 August 2011

[Video]

Dear Young Friends,

I greet all of you, especially the young people who have asked me their questions, and I thank them for the sincerity with which they set forth their concerns, that express the longing which all of you have to achieve something great in life, something which can bring you fulfilment and happiness.

How can a young person be true to the faith and yet continue to aspire to high ideals in today's society? In the Gospel we have just heard, Jesus gives us an answer to this urgent question: "As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love" (*Jn 15:9*).

Yes, dear friends, God loves us. This is the great truth of our life; it is what makes everything else meaningful. We are not the product of blind chance or absurdity; instead our life originates as part of a loving plan of God. To abide in his love, then, means living a life rooted in faith, since faith is more than the mere acceptance of certain abstract truths: it is an intimate relationship with Christ, who enables us to open our hearts to this mystery of love and to live as men and women conscious of being loved by God.

If you abide in the love of Christ, rooted in the faith, you will encounter, even amid setbacks and suffering, the source of true happiness and joy. Faith does not run counter to your highest ideals; on the contrary, it elevates and perfects those ideals. Dear young people, do not be satisfied with anything less than Truth and Love, do not be content with anything less than Christ.

Nowadays, although the dominant culture of relativism all around us has given up on the search for truth, even if it is the highest aspiration of the human spirit, we need to speak with courage and humility of the universal significance of Christ as the Saviour of humanity and the source of hope for our lives. He who took upon himself our afflictions, is well acquainted with the mystery of human suffering and manifests his loving presence in those who suffer. They in their turn, united to the passion of Christ, share closely in his work of redemption. Furthermore, our disinterested attention towards the sick and the forgotten will always be a humble and warm testimony of God's compassionate regard.

Dear friends, may no adversity paralyze you. Be afraid neither of the world, nor of the future, nor of your weakness. The Lord has allowed you to live in this moment of history so that, by your faith, his name will continue to resound throughout the world.

During this prayer vigil, I urge you to ask God to help you find your vocation in society and in the Church, and to persevere in that vocation with joy and fidelity. It is a good thing to open our hearts to Christ's call and to follow with courage and generosity the path he maps out for us.

The Lord calls many people to marriage, in which a man and a woman, in becoming one flesh (cf. *Gen 2:24*), find fulfilment in a profound life of communion. It is a prospect that is both bright and demanding. It is a project for true love which is daily renewed and deepened by sharing joys and sorrows, one marked by complete self-giving. For this reason, to acknowledge the beauty and goodness of marriage is to realize that only a setting of fidelity and indissolubility, along with openness to God's gift of life, is adequate to the grandeur and dignity of marital love.

Christ calls others to follow him more closely in the priesthood or in consecrated life. It is hard to put into words the happiness you feel when you know that Jesus seeks you, trusts in you, and with his unmistakable voice also says to you: "Follow me!" (cf. *Mk 2:14*).

Dear young people, if you wish to discover and to live faithfully the form of life to which the Lord is calling each of you, you must remain in his love as his friends. And how do we preserve friendship except through frequent contact, conversation, being together in good times and bad? Saint Teresa of Jesus used to say that prayer is just such "friendly contact, often spending time alone with the one who we know loves us" (cf. *Autobiography*, 8).

And so I now ask you to "abide" in the adoration of Christ, truly present in the Eucharist. I ask you to enter into conversation with him, to bring before him your questions and to listen to his voice.

Dear friends, I pray for you with all my heart. And I ask you to pray for me. Tonight let us ask the Lord to grant that, attracted by the beauty of his love, we may always live faithfully as his disciples. Amen.

Dear Friends: I thank you for your joy and your resistance. Your strength is greater than the rain. Thank you. With rain the Lord has sent us many blessings. In this also, you are an example.

[*French*] Dear young French-speakers, be proud of the gift of faith which you have received, as it will illumine your life at every moment. Draw strength from the faith of your neighbours, from the faith of the Church! Through faith we are grounded in Christ. Gather with others to deepen it, be faithful to the celebration of the Eucharist, the mystery of faith par excellence. Christ alone can respond to your aspirations. Let yourselves be seized by God, so that your presence in the Church will give her new life!

[*English*] Dear young people, in these moments of silence before the Blessed Sacrament, let us raise our minds and hearts to Jesus Christ, the Lord of our lives and of the future. May he pour out his Spirit upon us and upon the whole Church, that we may be a beacon of freedom, reconciliation and peace for the whole world.

[*German*] Dear young Christians from the German-speaking countries! Deep in our hearts we yearn for what is grand and beautiful in life. Do not let your desires and aspirations dissipate, but ground them in Jesus Christ. He himself is the sure foundation, the point of reference, for building up your life.

[*Italian*] I now turn to the Italian-speaking young people. Dear friends, this vigil will remain as an unforgettable experience in your lives. Guard the flame which God has lit in your hearts tonight. Never let it go out, renew it each day, share it with your contemporaries who live in darkness and who are seeking a light for their way. Thank you! Until tomorrow morning!

[*Portuguese*] My dear friends, I invite each of you to enter into a personal dialogue with Christ, sharing with him your hesitations and above all listening to his voice. The Lord is here and he is calling you! Young friends, it is good to hear within us the word of Jesus and to follow in his footsteps. Ask the Lord to help you to discover your vocation in life and in the Church, and to persevere in it with joy and fidelity, knowing that he never abandons you or betrays you! He remains with us until the end of the world.

[*Polish*] Dear young friends from Poland! This prayer vigil is filled with the presence of Christ. Grounded in his love, draw near to him with the flame of your faith. He will fill your hearts with his life. Build your lives on Christ and on his Gospel. I willingly bless all of you.

Dear Young Friends,

We have lived together an adventure. Strengthened by your faith in Christ, you have resisted the rain. Before leaving I wish you all good night. Have a good rest. I thank you for the sacrifice that you are making and I have no doubt that you will offer it generously to the Lord. We shall see one another tomorrow, God willing, in the celebration of the Eucharist. I am expecting all of you. I thank you for the fine example that you have given. As happened tonight, you can always, with Christ, endure the trials of life. Do not forget this. I thank you all.

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