

DOCUMENTS

Benedict XVI's Welcome to Youth

"Christ Offers More! Indeed He Offers Everything!"

SYDNEY, Australia, JULY 17, 2008 (Zenit.org).- Here is the address Benedict XVI gave today at Barangaroo East Darling Harbor in Sydney at the welcoming celebration of World Youth Day, under way through Sunday.

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Dear Young People,

What a delight it is to greet you here at Barangaroo, on the shores of the magnificent Sydney harbour, with its famous bridge and Opera House. Many of you are local, from the outback or the dynamic multicultural communities of Australian cities. Others of you have come from the scattered islands of Oceania, and others still from Asia, the Middle East, Africa and the Americas. Some of you, indeed, have come from as far as I have, Europe! Wherever we are from, we are here at last in Sydney. And together we stand in our world as God's family, disciples of Christ, empowered by his Spirit to be witnesses of his love and truth for everyone!

I wish firstly to thank the Aboriginal Elders who welcomed me prior to my boarding the boat at Rose Bay. I am deeply moved to stand on your land, knowing the suffering and injustices it has borne, but aware too of the healing and hope that are now at work, rightly bringing pride to all Australian citizens. To the young indigenous - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders - and the Tokelauans, I express my thanks for your stirring welcome. Through you, I send heartfelt greetings to your peoples.

Cardinal Pell, Cardinal Ryłko, Archbishop Wilson, I thank you for your warm words of welcome. I know that your sentiments resonate in the hearts of the young gathered here this evening, and so I thank you all. Standing before me I see a vibrant image of the universal Church. The variety of nations and cultures from which you hail shows that indeed Christ's Good News is for everyone; it has reached the ends of the earth. Yet I know too that a good number of you are still seeking a spiritual homeland. Some of you, most welcome among us, are not Catholic or Christian. Others of you perhaps hover at the edge of parish and Church life. To you I wish to offer encouragement: step forward into Christ's loving embrace; recognize the Church as your home. No one need remain on the outside, for from the day of Pentecost the Church has been one and universal.

This evening I wish also to include those who are not present among us. I am thinking especially of the sick or mentally ill, young people in prison, those struggling on the margins of our societies, and those who for whatever reason feel alienated from the Church. To them I say: Jesus is close to you! Feel his healing embrace, his compassion and mercy!

Almost two thousand years ago, the Apostles, gathered in the upper room together with Mary and some faithful women, were filled with the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 1:14; 2:4). At that extraordinary moment, which gave birth to the Church, the confusion and fear that had gripped Christ's disciples were transformed into a vigorous conviction and sense of purpose.

They felt impelled to speak of their encounter with the risen Jesus whom they had come to call affectionately, the Lord. In many ways, the Apostles were ordinary. None could claim to be the perfect disciple. They failed to recognize Christ (cf. Lk 24:13-32), felt ashamed of their own ambition (cf. Lk 22:24-27), and had even denied him (cf. Lk 22:54-62). Yet, when empowered by the Holy Spirit, they were transfixed by the truth of Christ's Gospel and inspired to proclaim it fearlessly.

Emboldened, they exclaimed: repent, be baptized, receive the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 2:37-38)! Grounded in the Apostles' teaching, in fellowship, and in the breaking of the bread and prayer (cf. Acts 2:42), the young Christian community moved forward to oppose the perversity in the culture around them (cf. Acts 2:40), to care for one another (cf. Acts 2:44-47), to defend their belief in Jesus in the face of hostility (cf. Acts 4:33), and to heal the sick (cf. Acts 5:12-16). And in obedience to Christ's own command, they set forth, bearing witness to the greatest story ever: that God has become one of us, that the divine has entered human history in order to transform it, and that we are called to immerse ourselves in Christ's saving love which triumphs over evil and death. Saint Paul, in his famous speech to the Areopagus, introduced the message in this way: "God gives everything – including life and breath – to everyone ... so that all nations might seek God and, by feeling their way towards him, succeed in finding him. In fact he is not far from any of us, since it is in him that we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17: 25-28).

And ever since, men and women have set out to tell the same story, witnessing to Christ's truth and love, and contributing to the Church's mission. Today, we think of those pioneering Priests, Sisters and Brothers who came to these shores, and to other parts of the Pacific, from Ireland, France, Britain and elsewhere in Europe. The great majority were young - some still in their late teens - and when they bade farewell to their parents, brothers and sisters, and friends, they knew they were unlikely ever to return home. Their whole lives were a selfless Christian witness. They became the humble but tenacious builders of so much of the social and spiritual heritage which still today brings goodness, compassion and purpose to these nations. And they went on to inspire another generation. We think immediately of the faith which sustained Blessed Mary MacKillop in her sheer determination to educate especially the poor, and Blessed Peter To Rot in his steadfast resolution that community leadership must always include the Gospel. Think also of your own grandparents and parents, your first teachers in faith. They too have made countless sacrifices of time and energy, out of love for you.

Supported by your parish priests and teachers, they have the task, not always easy but greatly satisfying, of guiding you towards all that is good and true, through their own witness - their teaching and living of our Christian faith.

Today, it is my turn. For some of us, it might seem like we have come to the end of the world! For people of your age, however, any flight is an exciting prospect. But for me, this one was somewhat daunting! Yet the views afforded of our planet from the air were truly wondrous. The sparkle of the Mediterranean, the grandeur of the north African desert, the lushness of Asia's forestation, the vastness of the Pacific Ocean, the horizon upon which the sun rose and set, and the majestic splendour of Australia's natural beauty which I have been able to enjoy these last couple of days; these all evoke a profound sense of awe. It is as though one catches glimpses of the Genesis creation story - light and darkness, the sun and the moon, the waters, the earth, and living creatures; all of which are "good" in God's eyes (cf. Gen 1:1 - 2:4). Immersed in such beauty, who could not echo the words of the Psalmist in praise of the Creator: "how majestic is your name in all the earth?" (Ps 8:1).

And there is more - something hardly perceivable from the sky - men and women, made in nothing less than God's own image and likeness (cf. Gen 1:26). At the heart of the marvel of creation are you and I, the human family "crowned with glory and honour" (Ps 8:5). How astounding! With the Psalmist we whisper: "what is man that you are mindful of him?" (Ps 8:4). And drawn into silence, into a spirit of thanksgiving, into the power of holiness, we ponder. What do we discover? Perhaps reluctantly we come to acknowledge that there are also scars which mark the surface of our earth: erosion, deforestation, the squandering of the world's mineral and ocean resources in order to fuel an insatiable consumption. Some of you come from island nations whose very existence is threatened by rising water levels; others from nations suffering the effects of devastating drought. God's wondrous creation is sometimes experienced as almost hostile to its stewards, even something dangerous. How can what is "good" appear so threatening?

And there is more. What of man, the apex of God's creation? Every day we encounter the genius of human achievement. From advances in medical sciences and the wise application of technology, to the creativity reflected in the arts, the quality and enjoyment of people's lives in many ways are steadily rising. Among yourselves there is a readiness to take up the plentiful opportunities offered to you. Some of you excel in studies, sport, music, or dance and drama, others of you have a keen sense of social justice and ethics, and many of you take up service and voluntary work. All of us, young and old, have those moments when the innate goodness of the human person - perhaps glimpsed in the gesture of a little child or an adult's readiness to forgive - fills us with profound joy and gratitude.

Yet such moments do not last. So again, we ponder. And we discover that not only the natural but also the social environment - the habitat we fashion for ourselves - has its scars; wounds indicating that something is amiss. Here too, in our personal lives and in our communities, we can encounter a hostility, something dangerous; a poison which threatens to corrode what is good, reshape who we are, and distort the purpose for which we have been created. Examples abound, as you yourselves know. Among the more prevalent are alcohol and drug abuse, and the exaltation of violence and sexual degradation, often presented through television and the internet as entertainment. I ask myself, could anyone standing face to face with people who actually do suffer violence and sexual exploitation "explain" that these tragedies, portrayed in virtual form, are considered merely "entertainment"?

There is also something sinister which stems from the fact that freedom and tolerance are so often separated from truth. This is fuelled by the notion, widely held today, that there are no absolute truths to guide our lives. Relativism, by indiscriminately giving value to practically everything, has made "experience" all-important. Yet, experiences, detached from any consideration of what is good or true, can lead, not to genuine freedom, but to moral or intellectual confusion, to a lowering of standards, to a loss of self-respect, and even to despair.

Dear friends, life is not governed by chance; it is not random. Your very existence has been willed by God, blessed and given a purpose (cf. Gen 1:28)! Life is not just a succession of events or experiences, helpful though many of them are.

It is a search for the true, the good and the beautiful. It is to this end that we make our choices; it is for this that we exercise our freedom; it is in this – in truth, in goodness, and in beauty – that we find happiness and joy. Do not be fooled by those who see you as just another consumer in a market of undifferentiated possibilities, where choice itself becomes the good, novelty usurps beauty, and subjective experience displaces truth.

Christ offers more! Indeed he offers everything! Only he who is the Truth can be the Way and hence also the Life. Thus the "way" which the Apostles brought to the ends of the earth is life in Christ. This is the life of the Church. And the entrance to this life, to the Christian way, is Baptism.

This evening I wish therefore to recall briefly something of our understanding of Baptism before tomorrow considering the Holy Spirit. On the day of your Baptism, God drew you into his holiness (cf. 2 Pet 1:4). You were adopted as a son or daughter of the Father. You were incorporated into Christ. You were made a dwelling place of his Spirit (cf. 1 Cor 6:19). Baptism is neither an achievement, nor a reward. It is a grace; it is God's work. Indeed, towards the conclusion of your Baptism, the priest turned to your parents and those gathered and, calling you by your name said: "you have become a new creation" (Rite of Baptism, 99).

Dear friends, in your homes, schools and universities, in your places of work and recreation, remember that you are a new creation! Not only do you stand before the Creator in awe, rejoicing at his works, you also realize that the sure foundation of humanity's solidarity lies in the common origin of every person, the high-point of God's creative design for the world. As Christians you stand in this world knowing that God has a human face - Jesus Christ - the "way" who satisfies all human yearning, and the "life" to which we are called to bear witness, walking always in his light (cf. *ibid.*, 100).

The task of witness is not easy. There are many today who claim that God should be left on the sidelines, and that religion and faith, while fine for individuals, should either be excluded from the public forum altogether or included only in the pursuit of limited pragmatic goals. This secularist vision seeks to explain human life and shape society with little or no reference to the Creator. It presents itself as neutral, impartial and inclusive of everyone. But in reality, like every ideology, secularism imposes a world-view. If God is

irrelevant to public life, then society will be shaped in a godless image, and debate and policy concerning the public good will be driven more by consequences than by principles grounded in truth.

Yet experience shows that turning our back on the Creator's plan provokes a disorder which has inevitable repercussions on the rest of the created order (cf. 1990 World Day of Peace Message, 5). When God is eclipsed, our ability to recognize the natural order, purpose, and the "good" begins to wane. What was ostensibly promoted as human ingenuity soon manifests itself as folly, greed and selfish exploitation. And so we have become more and more aware of our need for humility before the delicate complexity of God's world.

But what of our social environment? Are we equally alert to the signs of turning our back on the moral structure with which God has endowed humanity (cf. 2007 World Day of Peace Message, 8)? Do we recognize that the innate dignity of every individual rests on his or her deepest identity - as image of the Creator - and therefore that human rights are universal, based on the natural law, and not something dependent upon negotiation or patronage, let alone compromise?

And so we are led to reflect on what place the poor and the elderly, immigrants and the voiceless, have in our societies. How can it be that domestic violence torments so many mothers and children? How can it be that the most wondrous and sacred human space - the womb - has become a place of unutterable violence?

My dear friends, God's creation is one and it is good. The concerns for non-violence, sustainable development, justice and peace, and care for our environment are of vital importance for humanity. They cannot, however, be understood apart from a profound reflection upon the innate dignity of every human life from conception to natural death: a dignity conferred by God himself and thus inviolable. Our world has grown weary of greed, exploitation and division, of the tedium of false idols and piecemeal responses, and the pain of false promises. Our hearts and minds are yearning for a vision of life where love endures, where gifts are shared, where unity is built, where freedom finds meaning in truth, and where identity is found in respectful communion. This is the work of the Holy Spirit! This is the hope held out by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is to bear witness to this reality that you were created anew at Baptism and strengthened through the gifts of the Spirit at Confirmation. Let this be the message that you bring from Sydney to the world!

Pope's Address at Youth Day Vigil

"Let Us Pray for the Resolve to Nurture Unity"

SYDNEY, Australia, JULY 19, 2008 (Zenit.org).- Here is the address Benedict XVI gave at the World Youth Day vigil Saturday night at the Randwick Racecourse in Sydney.

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Dear Young People,

Once again this evening we have heard Christ's great promise – "you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you". And we have heard his summons – "be my witnesses throughout the world" – (*Acts* 1:8). These were the very last words which Jesus spoke before his Ascension into heaven. How the Apostles felt upon hearing them, we can only imagine. But we do know that their deep love for Jesus, and their trust in his word, prompted them to gather and to wait; to wait not aimlessly, but together, united in prayer, with the women and Mary in the Upper Room (cf. *Acts* 1:14). Tonight, we do the same. Gathered before our much-travelled Cross and the icon of Mary, and under the magnificent constellation of the Southern Cross, we pray. Tonight, I am praying for you and for young people throughout the world. Be inspired by the example of your Patrons! Accept into your hearts and minds the sevenfold gift of the Holy Spirit! Recognize and believe in the power of the Spirit in your lives!

The other day we talked of the unity and harmony of God's creation and our place within it. We recalled how in the great gift of baptism we, who are made in God's image and likeness, have been reborn, we have become God's adopted children, a new creation. And so it is as children of Christ's light – symbolized by the lit candles you now hold – that we bear witness in our world to the radiance no darkness can overcome (cf. *Jn* 1:5).

Tonight we focus our attention on *how* to become witnesses. We need to understand the person of the Holy Spirit and his vivifying presence in our lives. This is not easy to comprehend. Indeed the variety of images found in scripture referring to the Spirit – wind, fire, breath – indicate our struggle to articulate an understanding of him. Yet we do know that it is the Holy Spirit who, though silent and unseen, gives direction and definition to our witness to Jesus Christ.

You are already well aware that our Christian witness is offered to a world which in many ways is fragile. The unity of God's creation is weakened by wounds which run particularly deep when social relations break apart, or when the human spirit is all but crushed through the exploitation and abuse of persons. Indeed, society today is being fragmented by a way of thinking that is inherently short-sighted, because it disregards the full horizon of truth – the truth about God and about us. By its nature, relativism fails to see the whole picture. It ignores the very principles which enable us to live and flourish in unity, order and harmony.

What is our response, as Christian witnesses, to a divided and fragmented world? How can we offer the hope of peace, healing and harmony to those "stations" of conflict, suffering, and tension through which you have chosen to march with this World Youth Day Cross? Unity and reconciliation cannot be achieved through our efforts alone. God has made us for one another (cf. *Gen* 2:24) and only in God and his Church can we find the unity we seek. Yet, in the face of imperfections and disappointments – both individual and institutional – we are sometimes tempted to construct artificially a "perfect" community. That temptation is not new. The

history of the Church includes many examples of attempts to bypass or override human weaknesses or failures in order to create a perfect unity, a spiritual utopia.

Such attempts to construct unity in fact undermine it! To separate the Holy Spirit from Christ present in the Church's institutional structure would compromise the unity of the Christian community, which is precisely the Spirit's gift! It would betray the nature of the Church as the living temple of the Holy Spirit (cf. *1 Cor* 3:16). It is the Spirit, in fact, who guides the Church in the way of all truth and unifies her in communion and in the works of ministry (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 4). Unfortunately the temptation to "go it alone" persists. Some today portray their local community as somehow separate from the so-called institutional Church, by speaking of the former as flexible and open to the Spirit and the latter as rigid and devoid of the Spirit.

Unity is of the essence of the Church (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 813); it is a gift we must recognize and cherish. Tonight, let us pray for the resolve to nurture unity: contribute to it! resist any temptation to walk away! For it is precisely the comprehensiveness, the vast vision, of our faith – solid yet open, consistent yet dynamic, true yet constantly growing in insight – that we can offer our world. Dear young people, is it not because of your faith that friends in difficulty or seeking meaning in their lives have turned to you? Be watchful! Listen! Through the dissonance and division of our world, can you hear the concordant voice of humanity? From the forlorn child in a Darfur camp, or a troubled teenager, or an anxious parent in any suburb, or perhaps even now from the depth of your own heart, there emerges the same human cry for recognition, for belonging, for unity. Who satisfies that essential human yearning to be one, to be immersed in communion, to be built up, to be led to truth? The Holy Spirit! This is the Spirit's role: to bring Christ's work to fulfilment. Enriched with the Spirit's gifts, you will have the power to move beyond the piecemeal, the hollow utopia, the fleeting, to offer the consistency and certainty of Christian witness!

Friends, when reciting the Creed we state: "We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life". The "Creator Spirit" is the power of God giving life to all creation and the source of new and abundant life in Christ. The Spirit sustains the Church in union with the Lord and in fidelity to the apostolic Tradition. He inspired the Sacred Scriptures and he guides God's People into the fullness of truth (cf. *Jn* 16:13) In all these ways the Spirit is the "giver of life", leading us into the very heart of God. So, the more we allow the Spirit to direct us, the more perfect will be our configuration to Christ and the deeper our immersion in the life of the Triune God.

This sharing in God's nature (cf. *2 Pet* 1:4) occurs in the unfolding of the everyday moments of our lives where he is always present (cf. *Bar* 3:38). There are times, however, when we might be tempted to seek a certain fulfilment apart from God. Jesus himself asked the Twelve: "do you also wish to go away?" Such drifting away perhaps offers the illusion of freedom. But where does it lead? To whom would we go? For in our hearts we know that it is the Lord who has "the words of eternal life" (*Jn* 6:67-68). To turn away from him is only a futile attempt to escape from ourselves (cf. Saint Augustine, *Confessions* VIII, 7). God is with us in the reality of life, not the fantasy! It is embrace, not escape, that we seek! So the Holy Spirit gently but surely steers us back to what is real, what is lasting, what is true. It is the Spirit who leads us back into the communion of the Blessed Trinity!

The Holy Spirit has been in some ways the neglected person of the Blessed Trinity. A clear understanding of the Spirit almost seems beyond our reach. Yet, when I was a small boy, my parents, like yours, taught me the Sign of the Cross. So, I soon came to realize that there is one God in three Persons, and that the Trinity is the centre of our Christian faith and life. While I grew up to have some understanding of God the Father and the Son – the names already conveyed much – my understanding of the third person of the Trinity remained incomplete. So, as a young priest teaching theology, I decided to study the outstanding witnesses to the Spirit in the Church's history. It was on this journey that I found myself reading, among others, the great Saint Augustine.

Augustine's understanding of the Holy Spirit evolved gradually; it was a struggle. As a young man he had followed Manichaeism - one of those attempts I mentioned earlier, to create a spiritual utopia by radically separating the things of the spirit from the things of the flesh. Hence he was at first suspicious of the Christian teaching that God had become man. Yet his experience of the love of God present in the Church led him to investigate its source in the life of the Triune God. This led him to three particular insights about the Holy Spirit as the bond of unity within the Blessed Trinity: unity as communion, unity as abiding love, and unity as giving and gift. These three insights are not just theoretical. They help explain how the Spirit works. In a world where both individuals and communities often suffer from an absence of unity or cohesion, these insights help us remain attuned to the Spirit and to extend and clarify the scope of our witness.

So, with Augustine's help, let us illustrate something of the Holy Spirit's work. He noted that the two words "Holy" and "Spirit" refer to what is divine about God; in other words what is shared by the Father and the Son – their *communion*. So, if the distinguishing characteristic of the Holy Spirit is to be what is *shared* by the Father and the Son, Augustine concluded that the Spirit's particular quality is *unity*. It is a unity of lived communion: a unity of persons in a relationship of constant giving, the Father and the Son giving themselves to each other. We begin to glimpse, I think, how illuminating is this understanding of the Holy Spirit as unity, as communion. True unity could never be founded upon relationships which deny the equal dignity of other persons. Nor is unity simply the sum total of the groups through which we sometimes attempt to "define" ourselves. In fact, only in the life of communion is unity sustained and human identity fulfilled: we recognize the common need for God, we respond to the unifying presence of the Holy Spirit, and we give ourselves to one another in service.

Augustine's second insight – the Holy Spirit as abiding love – comes from his study of the First Letter of Saint John. John tells us that "God is love" (*1 Jn 4:16*). Augustine suggests that while these words refer to the Trinity as a whole they express a particular characteristic of the Holy Spirit. Reflecting on the lasting nature of love - "whoever abides in love remains in God and God in him" (*ibid.*) - he wondered: is it love or the Holy Spirit which grants the abiding? This is the conclusion he reaches: "The Holy Spirit makes us remain in God and God in us; yet it is love that effects this. The Spirit therefore is God as love!" (*De Trinitate*, 15.17.31). It is a beautiful explanation: God shares himself as love in the Holy Spirit. What further understanding might we gain from this insight? Love is the sign of the presence of the Holy Spirit! Ideas or voices which lack love – even if they seem sophisticated or knowledgeable – cannot be "of the Spirit". Furthermore, love has a particular trait: far from being indulgent or fickle, it has a task or purpose to fulfil: to abide. By its nature

love is enduring. Again, dear friends, we catch a further glimpse of how much the Holy Spirit offers our world: love which dispels uncertainty; love which overcomes the fear of betrayal; love which carries eternity within; the true love which draws us into a unity that abides!

The third insight – the Holy Spirit as gift – Augustine derived from meditating on a Gospel passage we all know and love: Christ's conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well. Here Jesus reveals himself as the giver of the living water (cf. *Jn* 4:10) which later is explained as the Holy Spirit (cf. *Jn* 7:39; *1 Cor* 12:13). The Spirit is "God's gift" (*Jn* 4:10) - the internal spring (cf. *Jn* 4:14), who truly satisfies our deepest thirst and leads us to the Father. From this observation Augustine concludes that God sharing himself with us as gift is the Holy Spirit (cf. *De Trinitate*, 15, 18, 32). Friends, again we catch a glimpse of the Trinity at work: the Holy Spirit is God eternally giving himself; like a never-ending spring he pours forth nothing less than himself. In view of this ceaseless gift, we come to see the limitations of all that perishes, the folly of the consumerist mindset. We begin to understand why the quest for novelty leaves us unsatisfied and wanting. Are we not looking for an eternal gift? The spring that will never run dry? With the Samaritan woman, let us exclaim: give me this water that I may thirst no more! (cf. *Jn* 4:15).

Dear young people, we have seen that it is the Holy Spirit who brings about the wonderful communion of believers in Jesus Christ. True to his nature as giver and gift alike, he is even now working through you. Inspired by the insights of Saint Augustine: let *unifying love* be your measure; *abiding love* your challenge; *self-giving love* your mission!

Tomorrow, that same gift of the Spirit will be solemnly conferred upon our confirmation candidates. I shall pray: "give them the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of right judgement and courage, the spirit of knowledge and reverence ... and fill them with the spirit of wonder and awe". These gifts of the Spirit – each of which, as Saint Francis de Sales reminds us, is a way to participate in the one love of God – are neither prizes nor rewards. They are freely given (cf. *1 Cor* 12:11). And they require only one response on the part of the receiver: I accept! Here we sense something of the deep mystery of being Christian. What constitutes our faith is not primarily what we do but what we receive. After all, many generous people who are not Christian may well achieve far more than we do. Friends, do you accept being drawn into God's Trinitarian life? Do you accept being drawn into his communion of love?

The Spirit's gifts working within us give direction and definition to our witness. Directed to unity, the gifts of the Spirit bind us more closely to the whole Body of Christ (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 11), equipping us better to build up the Church in order to serve the world (cf. *Eph* 4:13). They call us to active and joyful participation in the life of the Church: in parishes and ecclesial movements, in religious education classes, in university chaplaincies and other catholic organizations. Yes, the Church must grow in unity, must be strengthened in holiness, must be rejuvenated, must be constantly renewed (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 4). But according to whose standard? The Holy Spirit's! Turn to him, dear young people, and you will find the true meaning of renewal.

Tonight, gathered under the beauty of the night sky, our hearts and minds are filled with gratitude to God for the great gift of our Trinitarian faith. We recall our parents and grandparents who walked alongside us when

we, as children, were taking our first steps in our pilgrim journey of faith. Now many years later, you have gathered as young adults with the Successor of Peter. I am filled with deep joy to be with you. Let us invoke the Holy Spirit: he is the artisan of God's works (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 741). Let his gifts shape you! Just as the Church travels the same journey with all humanity, so too you are called to exercise the Spirit's gifts amidst the ups and downs of your daily life. Let your faith mature through your studies, work, sport, music and art. Let it be sustained by prayer and nurtured by the sacraments, and thus be a source of inspiration and help to those around you. In the end, life is not about accumulation. It is much more than success. To be truly alive is to be transformed from within, open to the energy of God's love. In accepting the power of the Holy Spirit you too can transform your families, communities and nations. Set free the gifts! Let wisdom, courage, awe and reverence be the marks of greatness!

Papal Homily at Closing Mass in Sydney

"May This 23rd World Youth Day Be Experienced as a New Upper Room"

SYDNEY, Australia, JULY 19, 2008 (Zenit.org).- Here is the text of the homily Benedict XVI gave at the World Youth Day closing Mass Sunday morning local time.

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Dear Friends,

"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you" (Acts 1:8). We have seen this promise fulfilled! On the day of Pentecost, as we heard in the first reading, the Risen Lord, seated at the right hand of the Father, sent the Spirit upon the disciples gathered in the Upper Room. In the power of that Spirit, Peter and the Apostles went forth to preach the Gospel to the ends of the earth. In every age, and in every language, the Church throughout the world continues to proclaim the marvels of God and to call all nations and peoples to faith, hope and new life in Christ.

In these days I too have come, as the Successor of Saint Peter, to this magnificent land of Australia. I have come to confirm you, my young brothers and sisters, in your faith and to encourage you to open your hearts to the power of Christ's Spirit and the richness of his gifts. I pray that this great assembly, which unites young people "from every nation under heaven" (cf. Acts 2:5), will be a new Upper Room. May the fire of God's love descend to fill your hearts, unite you ever more fully to the Lord and his Church, and send you forth, a new generation of apostles, to bring the world to Christ! "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you". These words of the Risen Lord have a special meaning for those young people who will be confirmed, sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit, at today's Mass. But they are also addressed to each of us - to all those who have received the Spirit's gift of reconciliation and new life at Baptism, who have welcomed him into their hearts as their helper and guide at Confirmation, and who daily grow in his gifts of grace through the Holy Eucharist. At each Mass, in fact, the Holy Spirit descends anew, invoked by the solemn

prayer of the Church, not only to transform our gifts of bread and wine into the Lord's body and blood, but also to transform our lives, to make us, in his power, "one body, one spirit in Christ".

But what is this "power" of the Holy Spirit? It is the power of God's life! It is the power of the same Spirit who hovered over the waters at the dawn of creation and who, in the fullness of time, raised Jesus from the dead. It is the power which points us, and our world, towards the coming of the Kingdom of God. In today's Gospel, Jesus proclaims that a new age has begun, in which the Holy Spirit will be poured out upon all humanity (cf. Lk 4:21). He himself, conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, came among us to bring us that Spirit. As the source of our new life in Christ, the Holy Spirit is also, in a very real way, the soul of the Church, the love which binds us to the Lord and one another, and the light which opens our eyes to see all around us the wonders of God's grace.

Here in Australia, this "great south land of the Holy Spirit", all of us have had an unforgettable experience of the Spirit's presence and power in the beauty of nature. Our eyes have been opened to see the world around us as it truly is: "charged", as the poet says, "with the grandeur of God", filled with the glory of his creative love. Here too, in this great assembly of young Christians from all over the world, we have had a vivid experience of the Spirit's presence and power in the life of the Church. We have seen the Church for what she truly is: the Body of Christ, a living community of love, embracing people of every race, nation and tongue, of every time and place, in the unity born of our faith in the Risen Lord. The power of the Spirit never ceases to fill the Church with life! Through the grace of the Church's sacraments, that power also flows deep within us, like an underground river which nourishes our spirit and draws us ever nearer to the source of our true life, which is Christ. Saint Ignatius of Antioch, who died a martyr in Rome at the beginning of the second century, has left us a splendid description of the Spirit's power dwelling within us. He spoke of the Spirit as a fountain of living water springing up within his heart and whispering: "Come, come to the Father" (cf. Ad Rom., 6:1-9).

Yet this power, the grace of the Spirit, is not something we can merit or achieve, but only receive as pure gift. God's love can only unleash its power when it is allowed to change us from within. We have to let it break through the hard crust of our indifference, our spiritual weariness, our blind conformity to the spirit of this age. Only then can we let it ignite our imagination and shape our deepest desires. That is why prayer is so important: daily prayer, private prayer in the quiet of our hearts and before the Blessed Sacrament, and liturgical prayer in the heart of the Church. Prayer is pure receptivity to God's grace, love in action, communion with the Spirit who dwells within us, leading us, through Jesus, in the Church, to our heavenly Father. In the power of his Spirit, Jesus is always present in our hearts, quietly waiting for us to be still with him, to hear his voice, to abide in his love, and to receive "power from on high", enabling us to be salt and light for our world.

At his Ascension, the Risen Lord told his disciples: "You will be my witnesses ... to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Here, in Australia, let us thank the Lord for the gift of faith, which has come down to us like a treasure passed on from generation to generation in the communion of the Church. Here, in Oceania, let us give thanks in a special way for all those heroic missionaries, dedicated priests and religious, Christian

parents and grandparents, teachers and catechists who built up the Church in these lands - witnesses like Blessed Mary MacKillop, Saint Peter Chanel, Blessed Peter To Rot, and so many others! The power of the Spirit, revealed in their lives, is still at work in the good they left behind, in the society which they shaped and which is being handed on to you.

Dear young people, let me now ask you a question. What will you leave to the next generation? Are you building your lives on firm foundations, building something that will endure? Are you living your lives in a way that opens up space for the Spirit in the midst of a world that wants to forget God, or even rejects him in the name of a falsely-conceived freedom? How are you using the gifts you have been given, the "power" which the Holy Spirit is even now prepared to release within you? What legacy will you leave to young people yet to come? What difference will you make? The power of the Holy Spirit does not only enlighten and console us. It also points us to the future, to the coming of God's Kingdom. What a magnificent vision of a humanity redeemed and renewed we see in the new age promised by today's Gospel! Saint Luke tells us that Jesus Christ is the fulfilment of all God's promises, the Messiah who fully possesses the Holy Spirit in order to bestow that gift upon all mankind. The outpouring of Christ's Spirit upon humanity is a pledge of hope and deliverance from everything that impoverishes us. It gives the blind new sight; it sets the downtrodden free, and it creates unity in and through diversity (cf. Lk 4:18-19; Is 61:1-2). This power can create a new world: it can "renew the face of the earth" (cf. Ps 104:30)!

Empowered by the Spirit, and drawing upon faith's rich vision, a new generation of Christians is being called to help build a world in which God's gift of life is welcomed, respected and cherished - not rejected, feared as a threat and destroyed. A new age in which love is not greedy or self-seeking, but pure, faithful and genuinely free, open to others, respectful of their dignity, seeking their good, radiating joy and beauty. A new age in which hope liberates us from the shallowness, apathy and self-absorption which deaden our souls and poison our relationships. Dear young friends, the Lord is asking you to be prophets of this new age, messengers of his love, drawing people to the Father and building a future of hope for all humanity.

The world needs this renewal! In so many of our societies, side by side with material prosperity, a spiritual desert is spreading: an interior emptiness, an unnamed fear, a quiet sense of despair. How many of our contemporaries have built broken and empty cisterns (cf. Jer 2:13) in a desperate search for meaning - the ultimate meaning that only love can give? This is the great and liberating gift which the Gospel brings: it reveals our dignity as men and women created in the image and likeness of God. It reveals humanity's sublime calling, which is to find fulfilment in love. It discloses the truth about man and the truth about life.

The Church also needs this renewal! She needs your faith, your idealism and your generosity, so that she can always be young in the Spirit (cf. Lumen Gentium, 4)! In today's second reading, the Apostle Paul reminds us that each and every Christian has received a gift meant for building up the Body of Christ. The Church especially needs the gifts of young people, all young people. She needs to grow in the power of the Spirit who even now gives joy to your youth and inspires you to serve the Lord with gladness. Open your hearts to that power! I address this plea in a special way to those of you whom the Lord is calling to the priesthood

and the consecrated life. Do not be afraid to say "yes" to Jesus, to find your joy in doing his will, giving yourself completely to the pursuit of holiness, and using all your talents in the service of others!

In a few moments, we will celebrate the sacrament of Confirmation. The Holy Spirit will descend upon the confirmands; they will be "sealed" with the gift of the Spirit and sent forth to be Christ's witnesses. What does it mean to receive the "seal" of the Holy Spirit? It means being indelibly marked, inalterably changed, a new creation. For those who have received this gift, nothing can ever be the same! Being "baptized" in the one Spirit (cf. 1 Cor 12:13) means being set on fire with the love of God. Being "given to drink" of the Spirit means being refreshed by the beauty of the Lord's plan for us and for the world, and becoming in turn a source of spiritual refreshment for others. Being "sealed with the Spirit" means not being afraid to stand up for Christ, letting the truth of the Gospel permeate the way we see, think and act, as we work for the triumph of the civilization of love.

As we pray for the confirmands, let us ask that the power of the Holy Spirit will revive the grace of our own Confirmation. May he pour out his gifts in abundance on all present, on this city of Sydney, on this land of Australia and on all its people! May each of us be renewed in the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of right judgement and courage, the spirit of knowledge and reverence, the spirit of wonder and awe in God's presence!

Through the loving intercession of Mary, Mother of the Church, may this Twenty-third World Youth Day be experienced as a new Upper Room, from which all of us, burning with the fire and love of the Holy Spirit, go forth to proclaim the Risen Christ and to draw every heart to him! Amen.

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On God's Marriage Proposal

"In Our Name, Mary Said Yes"

SYDNEY, Australia, JULY 19, 2008 (Zenit.org).- Here is the text of the address Benedict XVI gave before and after praying the midday Angelus, at the end of the World Youth Day closing Mass.

* * *

Dear Young Friends,

In the beautiful prayer that we are about to recite, we reflect on Mary as a young woman, receiving the Lord's summons to dedicate her life to him in a very particular way, a way that would involve the generous gift of herself, her womanhood, her motherhood. Imagine how she must have felt. She was filled with apprehension, utterly overwhelmed at the prospect that lay before her.

The angel understood her anxiety and immediately sought to reassure her. "Do not be afraid, Mary The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you" (Lk 1:30, 35). It was the Spirit who gave her the strength and courage to respond to the Lord's call. It was the Spirit who helped her to understand the great mystery that was to be accomplished through her. It was the Spirit who enfolded her with his love and enabled her to conceive the Son of God in her womb.

This scene is perhaps the pivotal moment in the history of God's relationship with his people. During the Old Testament, God revealed himself partially, gradually, as we all do in our personal relationships. It took time for the chosen people to develop their relationship with God. The Covenant with Israel was like a period of courtship, a long engagement. Then came the definitive moment, the moment of marriage, the establishment of a new and everlasting covenant. As Mary stood before the Lord, she represented the whole of humanity. In the angel's message, it was as if God made a marriage proposal to the human race. And in our name, Mary said yes.

In fairy tales, the story ends there, and all "live happily ever after". In real life it is not so simple. For Mary there were many struggles ahead, as she lived out the consequences of the "yes" that she had given to the Lord. Simeon prophesied that a sword would pierce her heart. When Jesus was twelve years old, she experienced every parent's worst nightmare when, for three days, the child went missing. And after his public ministry, she suffered the agony of witnessing his crucifixion and death. Throughout her trials she remained faithful to her promise, sustained by the Spirit of fortitude. And she was gloriously rewarded.

Dear young people, we too must remain faithful to the "yes" that we have given to the Lord's offer of friendship. We know that he will never abandon us. We know that he will always sustain us through the gifts of the Spirit. Mary accepted the Lord's "proposal" in our name. So let us turn to her and ask her to guide us as we struggle to remain faithful to the life-giving relationship that God has established with each one of us. She is our example and our inspiration, she intercedes for us with her Son, and with a mother's love she shields us from harm.

[After leading the Angelus, prayed in Latin, there were farewell addresses from Cardinals George Pell of Sydney and Stanislaw Ryko, president of the Pontifical Council for the Laity. Then, the Holy Father greeted the youth in five languages. Finally, the Pontiff said:]

The time has come for me to say good-bye - or rather, to say arrivederci! I thank you all for your participation in World Youth Day 2008, here in Sydney, and I look forward to seeing you again in three years' time. World Youth Day 2011 will take place in Madrid, Spain. Until then, let us continue to pray for one another, and let us joyfully bear witness to Christ before the world. May God bless you all.

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Papal Homily at Mass With Australian Clergy

"We Can Be Tempted to Make Faith a Matter of Sentiment"

SYDNEY, Australia, JULY 18, 2008 (Zenit.org).- Here is the text of the homily Benedict XVI gave at Mass with Australian bishops and clergy on Saturday morning local time.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

In this noble cathedral I rejoice to greet my brother Bishops and priests, and the deacons, religious and laity of the Archdiocese of Sydney. In a very special way, my greeting goes to the seminarians and young religious who are present among us. Like the young Israelites in today's first reading, they are a sign of hope and renewal for God's people; and, like those young Israelites, they will have the task of building up the Lord's house in the coming generation. As we admire this magnificent edifice, how can we not think of all those ranks of priests, religious and faithful laity who, each in his or her own way, contributed to the building up of the Church in Australia? Our thoughts turn in particular to those settler families to whom Father Jeremiah O'Flynn entrusted the Blessed Sacrament at his departure, a "small flock" which cherished and preserved that precious treasure, passing it on to the succeeding generations who raised this great tabernacle to the glory of God. Let us rejoice in their fidelity and perseverance, and dedicate ourselves to carrying on their labours for the spread of the Gospel, the conversion of hearts and the growth of the Church in holiness, unity and charity!

We are about to celebrate the dedication of the new altar of this venerable cathedral. As its sculpted frontal powerfully reminds us, every altar is a symbol of Jesus Christ, present in the midst of his Church as priest, altar and victim (cf. Preface of Easter V). Crucified, buried and raised from the dead, given life in the Spirit and seated at the right hand of the Father, Christ has become our great high priest, eternally making intercession for us. In the Church's liturgy, and above all in the sacrifice of the Mass consummated on the altars of the world, he invites us, the members of his mystical Body, to share in his self-oblation. He calls us, as the priestly people of the new and eternal covenant, to offer, in union with him, our own daily sacrifices for the salvation of the world.

In today's liturgy the Church reminds us that, like this altar, we too have been consecrated, set "apart" for the service of God and the building up of his Kingdom. All too often, however, we find ourselves immersed in a world that would set God "aside". In the name of human freedom and autonomy, God's name is passed over in silence, religion is reduced to private devotion, and faith is shunned in the public square. At times this mentality, so completely at odds with the core of the Gospel, can even cloud our own understanding of the Church and her mission. We too can be tempted to make the life of faith a matter of mere sentiment, thus blunting its power to inspire a consistent vision of the world and a rigorous dialogue with the many other visions competing for the minds and hearts of our contemporaries.

Yet history, including the history of our own time, shows that the question of God will never be silenced, and that indifference to the religious dimension of human existence ultimately diminishes and betrays man himself. Is that not the message which is proclaimed by the magnificent architecture of this cathedral? Is

that not the mystery of faith which will be proclaimed from this altar at every celebration of the Eucharist? Faith teaches us that in Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word, we come to understand the grandeur of our own humanity, the mystery of our life on this earth, and the sublime destiny which awaits us in heaven (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 24). Faith teaches us that we are God's creatures, made in his image and likeness, endowed with an inviolable dignity, and called to eternal life. Wherever man is diminished, the world around us is also diminished; it loses its ultimate meaning and strays from its goal. What emerges is a culture, not of life, but of death. How could this be considered "progress"? It is a backward step, a form of regression which ultimately dries up the very sources of life for individuals and all of society.

We know that in the end - as Saint Ignatius of Loyola saw so clearly - the only real "standard" against which all human reality can be measured is the Cross and its message of an unmerited love which triumphs over evil, sin and death, creating new life and unfading joy. The Cross reveals that we find ourselves only by giving our lives away, receiving God's love as an unmerited gift and working to draw all men and women into the beauty of that love and the light of the truth which alone brings salvation to the world. It is in this truth - this mystery of faith - that we have been "consecrated" (cf. *Jn 17:17-19*), and it is in this truth that we are called to grow, with the help of God's grace, in daily fidelity to his word, within the life-giving communion of the Church. Yet how difficult is this path of consecration! It demands continual "conversion", a sacrificial death to self which is the condition for belonging fully to God, a change of mind and heart which brings true freedom and a new breadth of vision. Today's liturgy offers an eloquent symbol of that progressive spiritual transformation to which each of us is called. From the sprinkling of water, the proclamation of God's word and the invocation of all the saints, to the prayer of consecration, the anointing and washing of the altar, its being clothed in white and apparelled in light - all these rites invite us to re-live our own consecration in Baptism. They invite us to reject sin and its false allure, and to drink ever more deeply from the life-giving springs of God's grace.

Dear friends, may this celebration, in the presence of the Successor of Peter, be a moment of rededication and renewal for the whole Church in Australia! Here I would like to pause to acknowledge the shame which we have all felt as a result of the sexual abuse of minors by some clergy and religious in this country. These misdeeds, which constitute so grave a betrayal of trust, deserve unequivocal condemnation. They have caused great pain and have damaged the Church's witness. I ask all of you to support and assist your Bishops, and to work together with them in combating this evil. Victims should receive compassion and care, and those responsible for these evils must be brought to justice. It is an urgent priority to promote a safer and more wholesome environment, especially for young people. In these days marked by the celebration of World Youth Day, we are reminded of how precious a treasure has been entrusted to us in our young people, and how great a part of the Church's mission in this country has been dedicated to their education and care. As the Church in Australia continues, in the spirit of the Gospel, to address effectively this serious pastoral challenge, I join you in praying that this time of purification will bring about healing, reconciliation and ever greater fidelity to the moral demands of the Gospel.

I wish now to turn to the seminarians and young religious in our midst, with a special word of affection and encouragement. Dear friends: with great generosity you have set out on a particular path of consecration,

grounded in your Baptism and undertaken in response to the Lord's personal call. You have committed yourselves, in different ways, to accepting Christ's invitation to follow him, to leave all behind, and to devote your lives to the pursuit of holiness and the service of his people.

In today's Gospel, the Lord calls us to "believe in the light" (Jn 12:36). These words have a special meaning for you, dear young seminarians and religious. They are a summons to trust in the truth of God's word and to hope firmly in his promises. They invite us to see, with the eyes of faith, the infallible working of his grace all around us, even in those dark times when all our efforts seem to be in vain. Let this altar, with its powerful image of Christ the Suffering Servant, be a constant inspiration to you. Certainly there are times when every faithful disciple will feel the heat and the burden of the day (cf. Mt 20:12), and the struggle of bearing prophetic witness before a world which can appear deaf to the demands of God's word. Do not be afraid! Believe in the light! Take to heart the truth which we have heard in today's second reading: "Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today and for ever" (Heb 13:8). The light of Easter continues to dispel the darkness!

The Lord also calls us to walk in the light (cf. Jn 12:35). Each of you has embarked on the greatest and the most glorious of all struggles, to be consecrated in truth, to grow in virtue, to achieve harmony between your thoughts and ideals, and your words and actions. Enter sincerely and deeply into the discipline and spirit of your programmes of formation. Walk in Christ's light daily through fidelity to personal and liturgical prayer, nourished by meditation on the inspired word of God. The Fathers of the Church loved to see the Scriptures as a spiritual Eden, a garden where we can walk freely with God, admiring the beauty and harmony of his saving plan as it bears fruit in our own lives, in the life of the Church and in all of history. Let prayer, then, and meditation on God's word, be the lamp which illumines, purifies and guides your steps along the path which the Lord has marked out for you. Make the daily celebration of the Eucharist the centre of your life. At each Mass, when the Lord's Body and Blood are lifted up at the end of the Eucharistic Prayer, lift up your own hearts and lives, through Christ, with him and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, as a loving sacrifice to God our Father.

In this way, dear young seminarians and religious, you yourselves will become living altars, where Christ's sacrificial love is made present as an inspiration and a source of spiritual nourishment to everyone you meet. By embracing the Lord's call to follow him in chastity, poverty and obedience, you have begun a journey of radical discipleship which will make you "signs of contradiction" (cf. Lk 2:34) to many of your contemporaries. Model your lives daily on the Lord's own loving self-oblation in obedience to the will of the Father. You will then discover the freedom and joy which can draw others to the Love which lies beyond all other loves as their source and their ultimate fulfilment. Never forget that celibacy for the sake of the Kingdom means embracing a life completely devoted to love, a love that enables you to commit yourselves fully to God's service and to be totally present to your brothers and sisters, especially those in need. The greatest treasures that you share with other young people - your idealism, your generosity, your time and energy - these are the very sacrifices which you are placing upon the Lord's altar. May you always cherish this beautiful charism which God has given you for his glory and the building up of the Church!

Dear friends, let me conclude these reflections by drawing your attention to the great stained glass window in the chancel of this cathedral. There Our Lady, Queen of Heaven, is represented enthroned in majesty beside her divine Son. The artist has represented Mary, as the new Eve, offering an apple to Christ, the new Adam. This gesture symbolizes her reversal of our first parents' disobedience, the rich fruit which God's grace bore in her own life, and the first fruits of that redeemed and glorified humanity which she has preceded into the glory of heaven. Let us ask Mary, Help of Christians, to sustain the Church in Australia in fidelity to that grace by which the Crucified Lord even now "draws to himself" all creation and every human heart (cf. Jn 12:32). May the power of his Holy Spirit consecrate the faithful of this land in truth, and bring forth abundant fruits of holiness and justice for the redemption of the world. May it guide all humanity into the fullness of life around that Altar, where, in the glory of the heavenly liturgy, we are called to sing God's praises for ever. Amen.

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Pope's Address to Disadvantaged Youth

"Choose the Path of Life and Shun the Path of Death"

SYDNEY, Australia, JULY 18, 2008 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- Here is Benedict XVI's address on Friday in Sydney to a group of disadvantaged young people of the rehabilitation community of the university of Notre Dame. The meeting took place at the Church of the Sacred Heart.

* * *

Dear Young Friends,

I am pleased to be with you at Darlinghurst today, and I warmly greet all those taking part in the "Alive" programme, as well as the staff who run it. I pray that you will all benefit from the assistance offered by the Archdiocese of Sydney's Social Services Agency, and that the good work being done here will continue long into the future.

The name of the programme you are following prompts us to ask the question: what does it really mean to be "alive", to live life to the full? This is what all of us want, especially when we are young, and it is what Christ wants for us. In fact, he said: "I have come that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (Jn 10:10). The most basic instinct of all living things is to stay alive, to grow, to flourish, and to pass on the gift of life to others. So it is only natural that we should ask how best to do this.

For the people of the Old Testament, this question was just as urgent as it is for us today. No doubt they listened attentively when Moses said to them: "I set before you life or death, blessing or curse. Choose life, then, so that you and your descendants may live in the love of the Lord your God, obeying his voice, clinging to him – for in this your life consists" (Dt 30:19-20). It was clear what they had to do: they had to turn away

from other gods and worship the true God who had revealed himself to Moses – and they had to obey his commandments. You might think that in today’s world, people are unlikely to start worshipping other gods. But sometimes people worship “other gods” without realizing it. False “gods”, whatever name, shape or form we give them, are nearly always associated with the worship of three things: material possessions, possessive love, or power. Let me explain what I mean.

Material possessions, in themselves, are good. We would not survive for long without money, clothing and shelter. We must eat in order to stay alive. Yet if we are greedy, if we refuse to share what we have with the hungry and the poor, then we make our possessions into a false god. How many voices in our materialist society tell us that happiness is to be found by acquiring as many possessions and luxuries as we can! But this is to make possessions into a false god. Instead of bringing life, they bring death.

Authentic love is obviously something good. Without it, life would hardly be worth living. It fulfils our deepest need, and when we love, we become most fully ourselves, most fully human. But how easily it can be made into a false god! People often think they are being loving when actually they are being possessive or manipulative. People sometimes treat others as objects to satisfy their own needs rather than as persons to be loved and cherished. How easy it is to be deceived by the many voices in our society that advocate a permissive approach to sexuality, without regard for modesty, self-respect or the moral values that bring quality to human relationships! This is worship of a false god. Instead of bringing life, it brings death.

The power God has given us to shape the world around us is obviously something good. Used properly and responsibly, it enables us to transform people’s lives. Every community needs good leaders. Yet how tempting it can be to grasp at power for its own sake, to seek to dominate others or to exploit the natural environment for selfish purposes! This is to make power into a false god. Instead of bringing life, it brings death.

The cult of material possessions, the cult of possessive love and the cult of power often lead people to attempt to “play God”: to try to seize total control, with no regard for the wisdom or the commandments that God has made known to us. This is the path that leads towards death. By contrast, worship of the one true God means recognizing in him the source of all goodness, entrusting ourselves to him, opening ourselves to the healing power of his grace and obeying his commandments: that is the way to choose life.

A vivid illustration of what it means to turn back from the path of death onto the path of life is found in a Gospel story that I am sure you all know well: the parable of the prodigal son. When that young man left his father’s house at the beginning of the story, he was seeking the illusory pleasures promised by false “gods”. He squandered his inheritance on a life of indulgence, and ended up in abject poverty and misery. When he reached the very lowest point, hungry and abandoned, he realized how foolish he had been to leave his loving father. Humbly, he returned and asked forgiveness. Joyfully his father embraced him and exclaimed: “This son of mine was dead, and has come back to life; he was lost, and is found” (*Lk 15:24*).

Many of you must have had personal experience of what that young man went through. Perhaps you have made choices that you now regret, choices that led you down a path which, however attractive it appeared at the time, only led you deeper into misery and abandonment. The choice to abuse drugs or alcohol, to engage in criminal activity or self-harm, may have seemed at the time to offer a way out of a difficult or confusing situation. You now know that, instead of bringing life, it brings death. I wish to acknowledge your courage in choosing to turn back onto the path of life, just like the young man in the parable. You have accepted help – from friends or family, from the staff who run the “Alive” programme: from people who care deeply for your well-being and happiness.

Dear friends, I see you as ambassadors of hope to others in similar situations. You can convince them of the need to choose the path of life and shun the path of death, because you speak from experience. All through the Gospels, it was those who had taken wrong turnings who were particularly loved by Jesus, because once they recognized their mistake, they were all the more open to his healing message. Indeed, Jesus was often criticized by self-righteous members of society for spending so much time with such people. “Why does your master eat with tax collectors and sinners?”, they asked. He responded: “It is not the healthy who need the doctor, but the sick ... I did not come to call the virtuous but sinners” (cf. *Mt* 9:11-13). It was those who were willing to rebuild their lives who were most ready to listen to Jesus and become his disciples. You can follow in their footsteps, you too can grow particularly close to Jesus because you have chosen to turn back towards him. You can be sure that, just like the Father in the story of the prodigal son, Jesus welcomes you with open arms. He offers you unconditional love – and it is in loving friendship with him that the fullness of life is to be found.

I mentioned earlier that when we love we are fulfilling our deepest need and becoming most fully ourselves, most fully human. Loving is what we are programmed to do, what we were designed for by our Creator. Naturally, I am not talking about fleeting, shallow relationships, I am talking about real love, the very heart of Jesus’ moral teaching: “You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength” and “You must love your neighbour as yourself” (cf. *Mk* 12:30-31). This, if you like, is the programme that is hard-wired into every human person, if only we had the wisdom and generosity to live by it, if only we were ready to sacrifice our own preferences so as to be of service to others, to give our lives for the good of others, and above all for Jesus, who loved us and gave his life for us. That is what human beings are called to do, that is what it means to be truly alive.

Dear young friends, my message to you today is the same one that Moses proposed all those years ago. “Choose life, so that you and your descendants may live in the love of the Lord your God”. Let his Spirit guide you onto the path of life, so that you obey his commandments, follow his teachings, leave behind the wrong turnings that lead only to death, and commit yourselves to a lifelong friendship with Jesus Christ. In the power of the Holy Spirit, choose life and choose love, and bear witness before the world to the joy that it brings. That is my prayer for each one of you this World Youth Day. May God bless you all.

Papal Address at Ecumenical Meeting

"The Ecumenical Movement Has Reached a Critical Juncture"

SYDNEY, Australia, JULY 17, 2008 (Zenit.org).- Here is the address Benedict XVI gave Friday morning local time at an ecumenical meeting in Sydney. The Pope is in Australia for the 23rd World Youth Day, under way through Sunday.

* * *

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I give heartfelt thanks to God for this opportunity to meet and pray with all of you who have come here representing various Christian communities in Australia. Grateful for Bishop Forsyth's and Cardinal Pell's words of welcome, I joyfully greet you in the name of the Lord Jesus, the "cornerstone" of the "household of God" (Eph 2:19-20).

I would like to offer a particular greeting to Cardinal Edward Cassidy, former President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, who, due to ill health, could not be with us today. I recall with gratitude his steadfast dedication to improving mutual understanding among all Christians, and I would ask all of you to join me in praying for his speedy recovery.

Australia is a country marked by much ethnic and religious diversity. Immigrants arrive on the shores of this majestic land hoping to find happiness and opportunities for employment. Yours, too, is a nation which recognizes the importance of religious freedom. This is a fundamental right which, when respected, allows citizens to act upon values which are rooted in their deepest beliefs, contributing thus to the well-being of society. In this way, Christians cooperate, together with members of other religions, for the promotion of human dignity and for fellowship among all nations. Australians cherish cordial and frank discussion. This has served the ecumenical movement well. An example would be the Covenant signed in 2004 by the members of the National Council of Churches in Australia. This document recognizes a common commitment, sets out goals, and acknowledges points of convergence without glossing over differences.

Such an approach demonstrates not only the possibility of formulating concrete resolutions for fruitful cooperation in the present day, but also the need to continue patient discussion on theological points of difference. May your ongoing deliberations in the Council of Churches and in other local forums be sustained by what you have already achieved.

This year we celebrate the two thousandth anniversary of the birth of Saint Paul, a tireless worker for unity in the early Church. In the scripture passage we have just heard, Paul reminds us of the tremendous grace we have received in becoming members of Christ's body through baptism. This sacrament, the entryway to the Church and the "bond of unity" for everyone reborn through it (cf. *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 22), is accordingly

the point of departure for the entire ecumenical movement. Yet it is not the final destination. The road of ecumenism ultimately points towards a common celebration of the Eucharist (cf. *Ut Unum Sint*, 23-24; 45), which Christ entrusted to his Apostles as the sacrament of the Church's unity par excellence. Although there are still obstacles to be overcome, we can be sure that a common Eucharist one day would only strengthen our resolve to love and serve one another in imitation of our Lord: for Jesus' commandment to "do this in memory of me" (Lk 22:19) is intrinsically ordered to his admonition to "wash one another's feet" (Jn 13:14). For this reason, a candid dialogue concerning the place of the Eucharist - stimulated by a renewed and attentive study of scripture, patristic writings, and documents from across the two millennia of Christian history (cf. *Ut Unum Sint*, 69-70) - will undoubtedly help to advance the ecumenical movement and unify our witness to the world.

Dear friends in Christ, I think you would agree that the ecumenical movement has reached a critical juncture. To move forward, we must continually ask God to renew our minds with the Holy Spirit (cf. Rom 12:2), who speaks to us through the scriptures and guides us into all truth (cf. 2 Pet 1:20-21; Jn 16:13). We must guard against any temptation to view doctrine as divisive and hence an impediment to the seemingly more pressing and immediate task of improving the world in which we live. In fact, the history of the Church demonstrates that praxis is not only inseparable from, but actually flows out of doctrine or teaching. The more closely we strive for a deeper understanding of the divine mysteries, the more eloquently our works of charity will speak of God's bountiful goodness and love towards all. Saint Augustine expressed the nexus between the gift of understanding and the virtue of charity when he wrote that the mind returns to God by love (cf. *De Moribus Ecclesiae Catholicae*, XII, 21), and that wherever one sees charity, one sees the Trinity (*De Trinitate*, 8, 8, 12).

For this reason, ecumenical dialogue advances not only through an exchange of ideas but by a sharing in mutually enriching gifts (cf. *Ut Unum Sint*, 28; 57). An "idea" aims at truth; a "gift" expresses love. Both are essential to dialogue. Opening ourselves to accept spiritual gifts from other Christians quickens our ability to perceive the light of truth which comes from the Holy Spirit. Saint Paul teaches that it is within the *koinonia* of the Church that we have access to and the means of safeguarding the truth of the Gospel, for the Church is "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets" with Jesus himself as the cornerstone (Eph 2:20).

In this light, perhaps we might consider the complementary biblical images of "body" and "temple" used to describe the Church. By employing the image of a body (cf. 1 Cor 12:12-31), Paul draws attention to the organic unity and diversity that allows the Church to breathe and grow. Equally significant, however, is the image of a solid, well-structured temple composed of living stones rising on its sure foundation. Jesus himself brings together in perfect unity these images of "temple" and "body" (cf. Jn 2:21-22; Lk 23:45; Rev 21:22).

Every element of the Church's structure is important, yet all of them would falter and crumble without the cornerstone who is Christ. As "fellow citizens" of the "household of God", Christians must work together to ensure that the edifice stands strong so that others will be attracted to enter and discover the abundant treasures of grace within. As we promote Christian values, we must not neglect to proclaim their source by giving a common witness to Jesus Christ the Lord. It is he who commissioned the apostles, he whom the

prophets preached, and he whom we offer to the world. Dear friends, your presence fills me with the ardent hope that as we pursue together the path to full unity, we will have the courage to give common witness to Christ. Paul speaks of the importance of the prophets in the early Church; we too have received a prophetic calling through our baptism. I am confident that the Spirit will open our eyes to see the gifts of others, our hearts to receive his power, and our minds to perceive the light of Christ's truth. I express heartfelt thanks to all of you for the time, scholarship and talent which you have invested for the sake of the "one body and one spirit" (Eph 4:4; cf. 1 Cor 12:13) which the Lord willed for his people and for which he gave his very life. All glory and power be to him for ever and ever. Amen!

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Papal Address at Interreligious Meeting

"Schools Could Do Even More to Nurture the Spiritual Dimension"

SYDNEY, Australia, JULY 17, 2008 (Zenit.org).- Here is the address Benedict XVI gave Friday morning local time at an interreligious meeting in Sydney. The Pope is in Australia for the 23rd World Youth Day, under way through Sunday.

* * *

Dear Friends,

I extend cordial greetings of peace and goodwill to all of you who are here representing various religious traditions in Australia. Grateful for this encounter, I thank Rabbi Jeremy Lawrence and Sheikh Shardy for the words of welcome which they expressed in their own name and on behalf of your respective communities.

Australia is renowned for the congeniality of its people towards neighbour and visitor alike. It is a nation that holds freedom of religion in high regard. Your country recognizes that a respect for this fundamental right gives men and women the latitude to worship God according to their conscience, to nurture their spirits, and to act upon the ethical convictions that stem from their beliefs.

A harmonious relationship between religion and public life is all the more important at a time when some people have come to consider religion as a cause of division rather than a force for unity. In a world threatened by sinister and indiscriminate forms of violence, the unified voice of religious people urges nations

and communities to resolve conflicts through peaceful means and with full regard for human dignity. One of the many ways religion stands at the service of mankind is by offering a vision of the human person that highlights our innate aspiration to live generously, forging bonds of friendship with our neighbours. At their core, human relations cannot be defined in terms of power, domination and self-interest. Rather, they reflect and perfect man's natural inclination to live in communion and accord with others.

The religious sense planted within the human heart opens men and women to God and leads them to discover that personal fulfilment does not consist in the selfish gratification of ephemeral desires. Rather, it leads us to meet the needs of others and to search for concrete ways to contribute to the common good. Religions have a special role in this regard, for they teach people that authentic service requires sacrifice and self-discipline, which in turn must be cultivated through self-denial, temperance and a moderate use of the world's goods. In this way, men and women are led to regard the environment as a marvel to be pondered and respected rather than a commodity for mere consumption. It is incumbent upon religious people to demonstrate that it is possible to find joy in living simply and modestly, generously sharing one's surplus with those suffering from want.

Friends, these values, I am sure you will agree, are particularly important to the adequate formation of young people, who are so often tempted to view life itself as a commodity. They also have an aptitude for self-mastery: indeed, in sports, the creative arts, and in academic studies, they readily welcome it as a challenge. Is it not true that when presented with high ideals, many young people are attracted to asceticism and the practice of moral virtue through self-respect and a concern for others? They delight in contemplating the gift of creation and are intrigued by the mystery of the transcendent. In this regard, both faith schools and State schools could do even more to nurture the spiritual dimension of every young person. In Australia, as elsewhere, religion has been a motivating factor in the foundation of many educational institutions, and rightly it continues to occupy a place in school curricula today. The theme of education frequently emerges from the deliberations of the Interfaith Cooperation for Peace and Harmony, and I warmly encourage those participating in this initiative to continue the conversation about the values that integrate the intellectual, human and religious dimensions of a sound education.

The world's religions draw constant attention to the wonder of human existence. Who can help but marvel at the power of the mind to grasp the secrets of nature through scientific discovery? Who is not stirred by the possibility of forming a vision for the future? Who is not impressed by the power of the human spirit to set goals and to develop ways of achieving them? Men and women are endowed with the ability not only to imagine how things might be better, but to invest their energies to make them better. We are conscious of our unique relationship to the natural realm. If, then, we believe that we are not subject to the laws of the material universe in the same way as the rest of creation, should we not make goodness, compassion, freedom, solidarity, and respect for every individual an essential part of our vision for a more humane future?

Yet religion, by reminding us of human finitude and weakness, also enjoins us not to place our ultimate hope in this passing world. Man is "like a breath, his days are like a passing shadow" (Ps 144:4). All of us have

experienced the disappointment of falling short of the good we wish to accomplish and the difficulty of making the right choice in complex situations.

The Church shares these observations with other religions. Motivated by charity, she approaches dialogue believing that the true source of freedom is found in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. Christians believe it is he who fully discloses the human potential for virtue and goodness, and he who liberates us from sin and darkness. The universality of human experience, which transcends all geographical boundaries and cultural limitations, makes it possible for followers of religions to engage in dialogue so as to grapple with the mystery of life's joys and sufferings. In this regard, the Church eagerly seeks opportunities to listen to the spiritual experience of other religions. We could say that all religions aim to penetrate the profound meaning of human existence by linking it to an origin or principle outside itself. Religions offer an attempt to understand the cosmos as coming from and returning to this origin or principle. Christians believe that God has revealed this origin and principle in Jesus, whom the Bible refers to as the "Alpha and Omega" (cf. Rev 1:8; 22:1).

My dear friends, I have come to Australia as an ambassador of peace. For this reason, I feel blessed to meet you who likewise share this yearning and the desire to help the world attain it. Our quest for peace goes hand in hand with our search for meaning, for it is in discovering the truth that we find the sure road to peace (cf. Message for World Day of Peace, 2006). Our effort to bring about reconciliation between peoples springs from, and is directed to, that truth which gives purpose to life. Religion offers peace, but more importantly, it arouses within the human spirit a thirst for truth and a hunger for virtue. May we encourage everyone - especially the young - to marvel at the beauty of life, to seek its ultimate meaning, and to strive to realize its sublime potential!

With these sentiments of respect and encouragement, I commend you to the providence of Almighty God, and I assure you of my prayers for you and your loved ones, the members of your communities, and all the citizens of Australia.

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