



The Holy See

PASTORAL VISIT
OF HIS HOLINESS POPE BENEDICT XVI
IN POLAND

GREETING OF THE HOLY FATHER

MEETING WITH THE YOUNG PEOPLE

Kraków-Błonie, 27 May 2006

Dear Young Friends,

I offer all of you my warmest welcome! Your presence makes me happy. I thank the Lord for this cordial meeting. We know that “where two or three are gathered in the name of Jesus, he is in their midst” (cf. *Mt 18:20*). Today, you are much more numerous! Accordingly, Jesus is here with us. He is present among the young people of Poland, speaking to them of a house that will never collapse because it is built on the rock. This is the Gospel that we have just heard (cf. *Mt 7:24-27*).

My friends, in the heart of every man there is the desire for a house. Even more so in the young person’s heart there is a great longing for a proper house, a stable house, one to which he can not only return with joy, but where every guest who arrives can be joyfully welcomed. There is a yearning for a house where the daily bread is love, pardon and understanding. It is a place where the truth is the source out of which flows peace of heart. There is a longing for a house you can be proud of, where you need not be ashamed and where you never fear its loss. These longings are simply the desire for a full, happy and successful life. Do not be afraid of this desire! Do not run away from this desire! Do not be discouraged at the sight of crumbling houses, frustrated desires and faded longings. God the Creator, who inspires in young hearts an immense yearning for happiness, will not abandon you in the difficult construction of the house called life.

My friends, this brings about a question: “How do we build this house?” Without doubt, this is a

question that you have already faced many times and that you will face many times more. Every day you must look into your heart and ask: "How do I build that house called life?" Jesus, whose words we just heard in the passage from the evangelist Matthew, encourages us to build on the rock. In fact, it is only in this way that the house will not crumble. But what does it mean to build a house on the rock? Building on the rock means, first of all, to build on Christ and with Christ. Jesus says: "Every one then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house upon the rock" (*Mt 7:24*). These are not just the empty words of some person or another; these are the words of Jesus. We are not listening to any person: we are listening to Jesus. We are not asked to commit to just anything; we are asked to commit ourselves to the words of Jesus.

To build on Christ and with Christ means to build on a foundation that is called "crucified love". It means to build with Someone who, knowing us better than we know ourselves, says to us: "You are precious in my eyes and honoured, and I love you" (*Is 43:4*). It means to build with Someone, who is always faithful, even when we are lacking in faith, because he cannot deny himself (cf. *2 Tim 2:13*). It means to build with Someone who constantly looks down on the wounded heart of man and says: "I do not condemn you, go and do not sin again" (cf. *Jn 8:11*). It means to build with Someone who, from the Cross, extends his arms and repeats for all eternity: "O man, I give my life for you because I love you." In short, building on Christ means basing all your desires, aspirations, dreams, ambitions and plans on his will. It means saying to yourself, to your family, to your friends, to the whole world and, above all to Christ: "Lord, in life I wish to do nothing against you, because you know what is best for me. Only you have the words of eternal life" (cf. *Jn 6:68*). My friends, do not be afraid to lean on Christ! Long for Christ, as the foundation of your life! Enkindle within you the desire to build your life on him and for him! Because no one who depends on the crucified love of the Incarnate Word can ever lose.

To build on the rock means to build on Christ and with Christ, who is the rock. In the First Letter to the Corinthians, Saint Paul, speaking of the journey of the chosen people through the desert, explains that all "drank from the supernatural rock, which followed them, and the rock was Christ" (*1 Cor 10:4*). The fathers of the Chosen People certainly did not know that the rock was Christ. They were not aware of being accompanied by him who in the fulness of time would become incarnate and take on a human body. They did not need to understand that their thirst would be satiated by the very Source of life, capable of offering the living water which quenches every heart. Nonetheless, they drank from this spiritual rock that is Christ, because they yearned for this living water, and needed it. On the road of life we may sometimes not be aware of Jesus' presence. However, it is really this presence, living and true, in the work of creation, in the Word of God and in the Eucharist, in the community of believers and in every man redeemed by the precious Blood of Christ, which is the inexhaustible source of human strength. Jesus of Nazareth, God made Man, is beside us during the good times and the bad times and he thirsts for this relationship, which is, in reality, the foundation of authentic humanity. We read in the book of Revelation these important words: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will

come to him and eat with him, and he with me” (*Rev 3:20*).

My friends, what does it mean to build on the rock? Building on the rock also means building on Someone who was rejected. Saint Peter speaks to the faithful of Christ as a “living stone rejected by men but in God’s sight chosen and precious” (*1 Pet 2:4*). The undeniable fact of the election of Jesus by God does not conceal the mystery of evil, whereby man is able to reject Him who has loved to the very end. This rejection of Jesus by man, which Saint Peter mentions, extends throughout human history, even to our own time. One does not need great mental acuity to be aware of the many ways of rejecting Christ, even on our own doorstep. Often, Jesus is ignored, he is mocked and he is declared a king of the past who is not for today and certainly not for tomorrow. He is relegated to a storeroom of questions and persons one dare not mention publicly in a loud voice. If in the process of building the house of your life you encounter those who scorn the foundation on which you are building, do not be discouraged! A strong faith must endure tests. A living faith must always grow. Our faith in Jesus Christ, to be such, must frequently face others’ lack of faith.

Dear friends, what does it mean to build on the rock? Building on the rock means being aware that there will be misfortunes. Christ says: “The rain fell and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon the house ... ” (*Mt 7:25*). These natural phenomena are not only an image of the many misfortunes of the human lot, but they also indicate that such misfortunes are normally to be expected. Christ does not promise that a downpour will never inundate a house under construction, he does not promise that a devastating wave will never sweep away that which is most dear to us, he does not promise that strong winds will never carry away what we have built, sometimes with enormous sacrifice. Christ not only understands man’s desire for a lasting house, but he is also fully aware of all that can wreck man’s happiness. Do not be surprised therefore by misfortunes, whatever they may be! Do not be discouraged by them! An edifice built on the rock is not the same as a building removed from the forces of nature, which are inscribed in the mystery of man. To have built on rock means being able to count on the knowledge that at difficult times there is a reliable force upon which you can trust.

My friends, allow me to ask again: what does it mean to build on the rock? It means to build wisely. It is not without reason that Jesus compares those who hear his words and put them into practice to a wise man who has built his house on the rock. It is foolish, in fact, to build on sand, when you can do so on rock and therefore have a house that is capable of withstanding every storm. It is foolish to build a house on ground that does not offer the guarantee of support during the most difficult times. Maybe it is easier to base one’s life on the shifting sands of one’s own worldview, building a future far from the word of Jesus and sometimes even opposed to it. Be assured that he who builds in this way is not prudent, because he wants to convince himself and others that in his life no storm will rage and no wave will strike his house. To be wise means to know that the solidity of a house depends on the choice of foundation. Do not be afraid to be wise; that is to say, do not be afraid to build on the rock!

My friends, once again: what does it mean to build on the rock? Building on the rock also means to build on Peter and with Peter. In fact the Lord said to him: “You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it” (*Mt 16:18*). If Christ, the Rock, the living and precious stone, calls his Apostle “rock”, it means that he wants Peter, and together with him the entire Church, to be a visible sign of the one Saviour and Lord. Here, in Kraków, the beloved city of my Predecessor John Paul II, no one is astonished by the words “to build with Peter and on Peter”. For this reason I say to you: do not be afraid to build your life on the Church and with the Church. You are all proud of the love you have for Peter and for the Church entrusted to him. Do not be fooled by those who want to play Christ against the Church. There is one foundation on which it is worthwhile to build a house. This foundation is Christ. There is only one rock on which it is worthwhile to place everything. This rock is the one to whom Christ said: “You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church” (*Mt 16:18*). Young people, you know well the Rock of our times. Accordingly, do not forget that neither that Peter who is watching our gathering from the window of God the Father, nor this Peter who is now standing in front of you, nor any successive Peter will ever be opposed to you or the building of a lasting house on the rock. Indeed, he will offer his heart and his hands to help you construct a life on Christ and with Christ.

Dear friends, meditating on Christ’s words describing the rock as an adequate foundation for a house, we cannot help but notice that the last word is a hopeful one. Jesus says that, notwithstanding the harshness of the elements, the house is not destroyed, because it was built on the rock. In his word there is an extraordinary confidence in the strength of the foundation, a faith that does not fear contradictions because it is confirmed by the death and resurrection of Christ. This is the faith that years later was professed by Saint Peter in his letter: “Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and he who believes in him will not be put to shame” (*1 Pet 2:6*). Certainly “he will not be put to shame.” Dear young friends, the fear of failure can at times frustrate even the most beautiful dreams. It can paralyze the will, making one incapable of believing that it is really possible to build a house on the rock. It can convince one that the yearning for such a house is only a childish aspiration and not a plan for life. Together with Jesus, say to this fear: “A house founded on the rock cannot collapse!” Together with Saint Peter say to the temptation to doubt: “He who believes in Christ will not be put to shame!” You are all witnesses to hope, to that hope which is not afraid to build the house of one’s own life because it is certain that it can count on the foundation that will never crumble: Jesus Christ our Lord.

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