



The Holy See

PASTORAL VISIT

OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

TO SAVONA AND GENOA (LIGURIA) MEETING WITH THE YOUNG PEOPLE OF GENOA ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI Piazza Matteotti, Genoa

Sunday, 18 May 2008 Dear Young People, Unfortunately I am being pursued by the rain in these days but let us take it as a sign of blessing, of fertility for the land, as well as a symbol of the Holy Spirit who comes and renews the earth, even the arid terrain of our souls. You are the youth of Genoa! I am happy to see you here! I embrace you with the Heart of Christ! I thank the two representatives who have acted as your "spokespersons". And I thank you all for your work of preparation, not only external but above all spiritual: with the Eucharistic adoration and the prayer vigil you have really reached out to the Holy Spirit and, in the Spirit, you enter the Feast of the Most Holy Trinity that we are celebrating today. Thank you for this journey you have made! And I thank you for the enthusiasm that must always be a feature of your soul, not only in the years of your youth, full of expectations and dreams, but always, even when the years of youth are over and you will be called to live other seasons. But we must all remain young in heart! It is beautiful to be young and today everyone wants to be young, to stay young, and they disguise themselves as young, even if the time of youth has passed, visibly passed. And I wonder - I have thought about it - why is it beautiful to be young? What is the reason for the dream of eternal youth? It seems to me that there are two crucial elements: youth still has the whole future before it. Everything is in the future, a time of hope. The future is full of promises. To be sincere, we must say that for many people the future is also dark, full of threats. One wonders: will I find a job? Will I find somewhere to live? Will I find love? What will my true future be? And in the face of these threats, the future can also appear as a great void. Today, therefore, many desire to stop time for fear of a future in emptiness. They want to enjoy all the beauties of life instantly - and in this way the oil in the lamp is consumed just as life is beginning. Thus it is important to choose the true promises that pave the way to the future, even with sacrifices. Those who have chosen God still have before them in old age a future without end and without threats. It is therefore vital to choose well, not to destroy the future. And the first and fundamental choice must be God, God revealed in the Son Jesus Christ, and in the light of this choice which at the same time offers us company on the way, trustworthy company that never abandons me, in the light of this choice criteria are found to make the other necessary choices. Being young implies being good and generous and once again true goodness is Jesus himself, that Jesus whom you know or whom your heart is seeking: he is the

Friend who never betrays, faithful to the point of giving his life on the Cross. Surrender to his love! As you have printed on the tee-shirts made for this Meeting, "scioglietevi" [soften] before Jesus for he alone can melt your anxieties and fears and fulfil your expectations. He gave his life for us, for each one of us. Could he ever betray your trust? Could he lead you on the wrong paths? His are the ways of life, the ways that lead to the pastures of the soul, even if they rise steeply and are daunting. It is the spiritual life that I am asking you to cultivate, dear friends. Jesus said: "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing" (Jn 15: 5). Jesus comes to the point, he is clear and direct. Everyone understands him and takes a stand. The life of the soul is the encounter with him, the actual Face of God; it is silent, persevering prayer, it is sacramental life, it is the Gospel meditated upon, it is spiritual guidance, it is cordial membership in the Church, in your Ecclesial Communities. Yet how can one love, how can one enter into friendship with someone unknown? Knowledge is an incentive to love and love stimulates knowledge. This is how it is with Christ too. To find love with Christ, to truly find him as the companion of our lives, we must first of all be acquainted with him.

Like the two disciples who followed him after hearing the words of John the Baptist and asked him timidly, "Rabbi, where are you staying?", they wanted to know him better. It was Jesus himself, talking to his disciples who made the distinction: "Who do people say that I am", referring to those who knew him from afar, so to speak, by hear-say, and "Who do you say that I am?", referring to those who knew him personally, having lived with him and having truly penetrated his private life, to the point of witnessing his prayer, his dialogue with the Father. Thus, it is also important for us not to reduce ourselves merely to the superficiality of the many who have heard something about him - that he was an important figure, etc. - but to enter into a personal relationship to know him truly. And this demands knowledge of Scripture, especially of the Gospels where the Lord speaks to us. These words are not always easy, but in entering into them, entering into dialogue, knocking at the door of words, saying to the Lord, "Let me in", we truly find words of eternal life, living words for today, as timely as they were then and as they will be in the future. This conversation with the Lord in Scripture must always be a conversation that is not only individual but communal, in the great communion of the Church where Christ is ever present, in the communion of the liturgy, of the very personal encounter with the Holy Eucharist and of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, where the Lord says to me "I forgive you". And another very important step to take is to help the poor in need, to make time for others. There are many dimensions for entering into knowledge of Jesus; also, of course the lives of saints. You have plenty of Saints here in Liguria, in Genoa, who help us discover the true Face of Jesus. Only in this way, by being personally acquainted with Jesus, can we also communicate this friendship to others. We can overcome indifference. Because even if it seems invincible - in fact, indifference sometimes appears not to need a God - in fact, everyone knows that something is missing in his life. Only after discovering Jesus do we realize "this is what I was waiting for". And, the truer a friend of Jesus we are, the better able we are to open our hearts to others so that they too may become truly young and have a great future before them. At the end of our Meeting I shall have the joy of presenting the Gospel to some of you as a sign of a missionary mandate. Dear young people, venture forth into the milieus of life, your parishes, the

most difficult districts, the streets! Proclaim Christ the Lord, the hope of the world. The further people drift from God, their Source, the more they lose themselves, the more difficult human coexistence becomes and the more society crumbles. Stay united to one another, help one another to live and to increase in faith and in Christian life to be daring witnesses of the Lord. Be united but not closed. Be humble but not fearful. Be simple but non ingenuous. Be thoughtful but not complicated. Enter into dialogue with all, but be yourselves. Remain in communion with your Pastors: they are ministers of the Gospel, of the Divine Eucharist, of God's forgiveness. They are fathers and friends for you, your companions on the way. You need them and they - we all - need you. If each one of you, dear young people, remains united to Christ and to the Church, he or she can do great things. This is the hope I leave you to carry out. I say goodbye until Sydney to those of you who have enrolled to go to the [World Meeting in July](#), and I extend it to all, because anyone will be able to follow the event from here as well. I know that in those days the dioceses will be organizing some special community events so that there will truly be a new Pentecost for the young people of the whole world. I entrust you to the Virgin Mary, a model of availability and of humble courage in accepting the Lord's mission. Learn from her to make your life a "yes" to God! In this way Jesus will come to dwell within you and you will take him joyfully to all. With my Blessing!

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