



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO PARTICIPANTS AT A MEETING
SPONSORED BY THE YOUTH TOURIST CENTRE AND
THE INTERNATIONAL OFFICE FOR SOCIAL TOURISM***

Hall of the Swiss, Papal Summer Residence, Castel Gandolfo
Saturday, 27 September 2008

*Your Eminence,
Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and in the Priesthood,
Dear Friends,*

I receive you with joy and offer you my cordial welcome. I thank Cardinal Martino, President of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, for having explained to me the reasons for today's meeting and also for expressing your sentiments. I greet Archbishop Agostino Machetto, Secretary of the same Dicastery in charge of the pastoral care of human mobility, which also includes pastoral attention to tourism. I extend a greeting to Mrs Maria Pia Bertolucci and to Mons. Guido Lucchiari, respectively President and Ecclesiastical Adviser of the Tourist Centre for Youth (CTG), the main organizer of this meeting, as well as Dr Norberto Tonini, President of the International Office for Social Tourism (BITS) who has joined in the initiative. My affectionate greeting goes to all of you present here.

Our meeting is taking place on the occasion of today's celebration of World Tourism Day. The theme this year - *Tourism Responding to the Challenge of Climate Change* - points to a very timely problem, which concerns the potential of the tourist sector with regard to the state of the planet and of humanity's well-being. Both your Institutions seek to promote a tourism attentive to the integral advancement of the person, with a view to sustainability and solidarity. This makes you qualified agents in the work of safeguarding and responsibly making the most of the resources of creation, an immense gift of God to humanity.

Humanity is duty-bound to protect this treasure and to counter the indiscriminate use of the earth's

goods. Without an adequate ethical and moral limit, human behaviour can in fact become a threat and a challenge. Experience teaches that the responsible management of creation is, or should be, part of a healthy and sustainable tourist economy. On the contrary, the improper use of nature and the abuse inflicted on the culture of local peoples also damage tourism. Learning to respect the environment also teaches respect for others and for oneself. In 1991, in his Encyclical *Centesimus Annus*, my beloved Predecessor John Paul II had already denounced the excessive and arbitrary consumption of resources, recalling that man is God's collaborator in the work of creation and cannot replace him. He also emphasized that humanity today "must be conscious of its duties and obligations towards future generations" (n. 37).

It is therefore necessary, especially in the context of tourism, a great exploiter of nature, that everyone aim for a balanced management of our habitat, of what is our common home and will be for all who come after us. Environmental degradation can only be slowed down by spreading an appropriate behavioural culture entailing more modest ways of living. Hence the importance, as I recently recalled, of teaching *a responsible code of ethics* and of making "more constructive proposals so as to guarantee the good of future generations" (*Address at the Élysée Palace*, Paris, 12 September 2008).

In addition, the Church shares with your Institutions and other similar Organizations the commitment to foster the "social tourism" that promotes the participation of the weaker classes and can thus be an effective instrument to combat poverty and frailty, providing jobs, safeguarding resources and promoting equality. This form of tourism is a cause of hope in a world in which there is a noticeable gap between those who have everything and those who suffer hunger, famine, and drought. I hope that the reflection occasioned by this World Day of Tourism, thanks to the theme suggested, will succeed in influencing the lifestyle of numerous tourists in a positive way, so that each one may make his or her own contribution to the well-being of all, which is ultimately the well-being of each one.

Lastly, I address an invitation to young people so that through your institutions you may become supporters and champions of lifestyles that aim at an appreciation of nature and its defence, in a correct ecological perspective, as I stressed several times on the occasion of the *World Youth Day in Sydney last July*. It is also the task of new generations to promote healthy and supportive tourism that bans consumerism and the waste of the earth's resources, to make room for gestures of solidarity and friendship, of knowledge and understanding. In this way tourism can become a privileged educational instrument in peaceful coexistence. May God help you in your work. For my part, rest assured of my remembrance in prayer, as with affection I impart the Apostolic Blessing to those of you present here, to your loved ones and to the members of your praiseworthy institutions.

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