



The Holy See

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

WELCOME CEREMONY

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

International Airport of Madrid Barajas
Thursday, 18 August 2011

[[Video](#)]

Your Majesties,
Your Eminence the Archbishop of Madrid,
Your Eminences,
Dear Brother Bishops and Priests,
Distinguished National, Autonomous Regional and Local Authorities,
Dear Brothers and Sisters of Madrid and of all Spain,

I am grateful to Your Majesty for your presence together with the Queen, and for the kind and deferential words with which you welcomed me, reviving in me the unforgettable gestures of kindness which I received during my previous Apostolic Journeys to Spain, and most particularly during [my recent Visit to Santiago de Compostela and Barcelona](#). I greet very cordially those of you gathered here at Barajas and those of you following this event on radio and television. A very grateful greeting also goes to those who, with such commitment and dedication, from the ecclesiastical and civil spheres, have contributed with their efforts and work so that this [World Youth Day in Madrid](#) might unfold well and bring forth abundant fruits.

With all my heart I also wish to recognize the hospitality so many families, parishes, schools and other institutions which have welcomed young people from all over the world, firstly in various

regions and cities of Spain, and now in the great cosmopolitan and welcoming city of Madrid.

I have come here to meet thousands of young people from all over the world, Catholics committed to Christ searching for the truth that will give real meaning to their existence. I come as the Successor of Peter, to confirm them all in the faith, with days of intense pastoral activity, proclaiming that Jesus Christ is the way, the truth and the life; to motivate the commitment to build up the Kingdom of God in the world among us; to exhort young people to know Christ personally as a friend and so, rooted in his person, to become faithful followers and valiant witnesses.

Why has this multitude of young people come to Madrid? While they themselves should give the reply, it may be supposed that they wish to hear the word of God, as the motto for this World Youth Day proposed to them, in such a way that, rooted and built upon Christ, they may manifest the strength of their faith.

Many of them have heard the voice of God, perhaps only as a little whisper, which has led them to search for him more diligently and to share with others the experience of the force which he has in their lives. The discovery of the living God inspires young people and opens their eyes to the challenges of the world in which they live, with its possibilities and limitations. They see the prevailing superficiality, consumerism and hedonism, the widespread banalization of sexuality, the lack of solidarity, the corruption. They know that, without God, it would be hard to confront these challenges and to be truly happy, and thus pouring out their enthusiasm in the attainment of an authentic life. But, with God beside them, they will possess light to walk by and reasons to hope, unrestrained before their highest ideals, which will motivate their generous commitment to build a society where human dignity and true brotherhood are respected. Here on this Day, they have a special opportunity to gather together their aspirations, to share the richness of their cultures and experiences, motivate each other along a journey of faith and life, in which some think they are alone or ignored in their daily existence. But they are not alone. Many people of the same age have the same aspirations and, entrusting themselves completely to Christ, know that they really have a future before them and are not afraid of the decisive commitments which fulfill their entire lives. That is why it gives me great joy to listen to them, pray with them and celebrate the Eucharist with them. World Youth Day brings us a message of hope like a pure and youthful breeze, with rejuvenating scents which fill us with confidence before the future of the Church and the world.

Of course, there is no lack of difficulties. There are tensions and ongoing conflicts all over the world, even to the shedding of blood. Justice and the unique value of the human person are easily surrendered to selfish, material and ideological interests. Nature and the environment, created by God with so much love, are not respected. Moreover, many young people look worriedly to the future, as they search for work, or because they have lost their job or because the one they have is precarious or uncertain. There are others who need help either to avoid drugs or to recover from their use. There are even some who, because of their faith in Christ, suffer discrimination which

leads to contempt and persecution, open or hidden, which they endure in various regions and countries. They are harassed to give him up, depriving them of the signs of his presence in public life, not allowing even the mention of his holy name. But, with all my heart, I say again to you young people: let nothing and no one take away your peace; do not be ashamed of the Lord. He did not spare himself in becoming one like us and in experiencing our anguish so as to lift it up to God, and in this way he saved us.

In this regard, the young followers of Jesus must be aided to remain firm in the faith and to embrace the beautiful adventure of proclaiming it and witnessing to it openly with their lives. A witness that is courageous and full of love for their brothers and sisters, resolute and at the same time prudent, without hiding its Christian identity, living together with other legitimate choices in a spirit of respect while at the same time demanding due respect for one's own choices.

Your Majesty, as I reiterate my thanks for the kind welcome which you gave to me, I in turn wish to express my esteem for and nearness to all the peoples of Spain, as well as my admiration for a country so rich in history and in culture through the vitality of its faith, which has borne fruit in so many saints over the centuries, in numerous men and women who, leaving their native land, brought the Gospel to every corner of the globe, and in people through all this land who act with rectitude, solidarity and goodness. It is a great treasure which should be cared for constructively, for the common good of today and in order to offer a bright horizon to future generations. Although there are currently some reasons for concern, the greatest one is the desire for the betterment of all Spaniards with that dynamism which characterizes them and to which their deep and very fruitful Christian roots have contributed so much down through the centuries.

From this place I send very cordial greetings to you all, dear friends of Spain and Madrid, and those of you from other lands. During these days I will be with you, thinking of all young people in the world, in particular those who are going through various kinds of trial. Entrusting this Meeting to the most holy Virgin Mary, and to the patron saints of this Day, I ask God always to bless and protect the sons and daughters of Spain. Thank you very much.

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