



## The Holy See

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### ***MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI FOR THE ECUMENICAL CONGRESS IN GERMANY***

*Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,*

From Rome I greet all those who have gathered at the *Theresienwiese* in Munich for the liturgical celebration to open the second ecumenical Kirchentag. I recall with joy the years when I lived in the beautiful capital of Bavaria as the Archbishop of Munich and Freising. Therefore I address a special greeting to the Archbishop of Munich and Freising, Reinhard Marx, and to the regional Lutheran Bishop, Johannes Friedrich. I greet all the Bishops of Germany and of many of the world's countries, and in a special way also the representatives of the other Churches and ecclesial communities, and all the Christians who are participating in this ecumenical event. I also greet the representatives of public life and all those who are present via radio and television. May the peace of the Risen Lord be with you all!

"So That You Might Have Hope": with this motto you have gathered together in Munich. You wish to send a signal of hope to the Church and to society at such a difficult time. For this I thank you very much. Indeed, our world needs hope, our times need hope. But is the Church a place of hope? In recent months we have had to repeatedly face news which seeks to take joy away from the Church, which would darken her as a place of hope. Like the servants of the householder in the Gospel parable about the Kingdom of God, we too wish to ask the Lord: "Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then has it weeds?" (Mt 13: 27). Yes, with his Word and with the sacrifice of his life the Lord truly sowed good seed in the earth. It sprouted and grows. We need not think only of the great luminous historical figures, to whom the Church has given the title "saints". They were completely permeated by God, resplendent because of him. Each one of us also knows ordinary people, not mentioned in any newspaper nor reported in any history, who grew through faith achieving great humanity and goodness. In his impassioned dispute with God to save the city of Sodom, Abraham received assurance from the Lord of the Universe that if there were ten just people there then he would not destroy the city (cf. Gen 18: 22-33). Thanks be to God, in our cities there are many more than ten just people! If we can be more attentive today, if

we do not perceive only the darkness, but also what is light and good in our times, then we may see how faith makes men and women pure and generous and educates them in love. Again, weeds also exist within the Church and among those whom the Lord has welcomed into his service in a special way. But the light of God has not gone out; the good seed has not been destroyed by the seed of evil.

"So That You Might Have Hope": This phrase intends first of all to invite us not to lose sight of goodness and of good people. It invites us to be good ourselves and to become good again always. It invites us to plead with God for the world, like Abraham, ourselves passionately seeking to live by God's justice.

Is the Church then a place of hope? Yes, since from her the Word of God always reaches us afresh, the Word that purifies us and shows us the way of faith. This is because in her the Lord continues to give himself to us, in the grace of the sacraments, in the word of reconciliation, in the many gifts of his consolation. Nothing can darken or destroy all of this. We must be joyful for this in the midst of all the tribulation. If we speak of the Church as a place of hope that comes from God, then at the same time that entails an examination of conscience: What do I do with the hope that the Lord has given us? Do I really allow myself be formed by his Word? Do I let myself be changed and healed by him? How many weeds are truly growing in me? Am I disposed to root them out? Am I grateful for the gift of forgiveness and ready to forgive and to heal in turn, instead of condemning?

Let us ask once again: What really is "hope"? The things that we can achieve on our own are not objects of hope, but rather tasks that we must carry out with the force of our reason, our will and our heart. However, if we reflect on all that we can and should do, then we note that we cannot achieve the greater things that come to us only as a gift: friendship, love, joy, happiness. I would like to note one more thing: we all want to live, and we cannot even give life on our own. But almost no one today speaks of eternal life any more, which in the past was the true object of hope. Because no one dares to believe in it, one seeks to obtain everything from the present life. To set aside hope in eternal life leads to a greediness for life here and now, which almost inevitably becomes selfish and, in the end, remains unrealizable. Truly when we want to take hold of life as a type of good, it slips away. But let us go back. The great things of life that we cannot achieve by ourselves, can only be hoped for. The glad tidings of the faith consist truly of this: the One who can give them to us exists. We have not been left alone. God is living. God loves us. In Jesus Christ he became one of us. I can turn to him and he will listen to me. Because of this, like Peter, in our confused time, which persuades us to believe in other different ways, we say: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life; and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God" (Jn 6: 68-69).

Dear Friends, I wish for all of you who are gathered at the *Theresienwiese* in Munich to once again be overcome by the joy of being able to know God, to know Christ and to know that he knows us.

This is our hope and our joy amid the turmoil of the present.

*From the Vatican, 10 May 2010*

**BENEDICTUS PP. XVI**

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