



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO COLOGNE ON THE OCCASION OF THE XX WORLD YOUTH DAY

VISIT TO THE CATHEDRAL OF COLOGNE

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE BENEDICT XVI

*Cologne - Roncalliplatz
Thursday, 18 August 2005*

Dear Brothers and Sisters, I am pleased to be with you this evening, in this city of Cologne to which I am bound by so many beautiful memories. I spent the first years of my academic career in Bonn, unforgettable years of the reawakening of youth, of hope before the Council, years in which I often came to Cologne and learned to love this Rome of the North. Here one breathes the great history, and the flow of the river brings openness to the world. It is a meeting place, a place of culture. I have always loved the spirit, sense of humour, joyfulness and intelligence of its inhabitants. Besides, I have to say, I loved the catholicity that Cologne's inhabitants have in their blood, for Christians have existed here for almost 2,000 years, so that this catholicity has penetrated the character of the inhabitants in the sense of a joyful religiosity. Let us rejoice in this today. Cologne can give young people something of its joyful catholicity, which is at the same time both old and young. It was very beautiful for me that Cardinal Frings gave me his full confidence from the very first, making an authentically fatherly friendship with me. Then, despite my youth and lack of experience, he gave me the great gift of summoning me as his theologian, of bringing me to Rome so that I could take part beside him in the Second Vatican Council and live this extraordinary historical event from close at hand, making some small contribution to it. I also became acquainted with Cardinal Höffner, then Bishop of Münster, to whom I was likewise bound by a deep and lively friendship. Thanks be to God that this chain of friendships was never broken. Cardinal Meisner has also been my friend for a very long time, so that beginning with Frings and continuing with Höffner and Meisner, I have always been able to feel at home here in Cologne. I think the time has now come to say "thank you" to so many people with the strong, deep voice of the heart. In the first place, let us thank the good Lord who gives us the beautiful blue sky and his tangible blessing these days. Let us thank the Mother of God, who has taken the direction of

World Youth Day into her hands. I thank Cardinal Meisner and all his collaborators; Cardinal Lehmann, President of the German Bishops' Conference, and with him, all the Bishops of the German Dioceses, in particular the planning committee in Cologne, but also the Dioceses and local communities which have welcomed the young people in recent days. I can well imagine what all of this entails in terms of energy spent and sacrifices accepted, and I pray that it will bear abundant fruit in the spiritual success of this [World Youth Day](#). Finally, I cannot fail to express my profound gratitude to the civil and military Authorities, the leaders of the city and region, and the police and security forces of Germany and North Rhine-Westphalia. In the person of the Mayor I thank the people of Cologne for their understanding in the face of this "invasion" by so many young people from all over the world. The city of Cologne would not be what it is without the Magi, who have had so great an impact on its history, its culture and its faith. Here, in some sense, the Church celebrates the Feast of the Epiphany every day of the year! And so, before addressing you, dear inhabitants of Cologne, before greeting you, I wanted to pause for a few moments of prayer before the reliquary of the three Magi, giving thanks to God for their witness of faith, hope and love. You should know that in 1164 the relics of the Magi were escorted by the Archbishop of Cologne, Reinald von Dassel, from Milan, across the Alps, all the way to Cologne, where they were received with great jubilation. On their pilgrimage across Europe these relics left visible traces behind them which still live on today, both in place names and in popular devotions. In honour of the Magi the inhabitants of Cologne produced the most exquisite reliquary of the whole Christian world and raised above it an even greater reliquary: Cologne Cathedral. Along with Jerusalem the "Holy City", Rome the "Eternal City" and Santiago de Compostela in Spain, Cologne, thanks to the Magi, has become down the centuries one of the most important places of pilgrimage in the Christian West. I do not want here to continue to sing the praises of Cologne, although it would be possible and meaningful to do so; it would take too long, for it would be necessary to say too many important and beautiful things about Cologne. However, I would like to recall that we venerate St Ursula and her companions here; that in 745 the Holy Father named St Boniface Archbishop of Cologne; that St Albert the Great, one of the most learned scholars of the Middle Ages, worked here and that his relics are venerated in the Church of St Andrew; that Thomas Aquinas, the greatest theologian of the West, studied and taught here; that in the 19th century Adolph Kolping founded an important social institution; that Edith Stein, a converted Jew, lived here in Cologne at the Carmelite Convent before being forced to flee to the Convent of Echt in Holland to be deported subsequently to Auschwitz, where she died a martyr. Thanks to these and all the other figures, both known and unknown, Cologne possesses a rich legacy of saints. I would like to add, at least as far as I know, that here in Cologne one of the Magi has been identified as a Moorish King of Africa, so that a representative of the African Continent has been seen as one of Jesus Christ's first witnesses. I would also like to add that it was here in Cologne that important exemplary initiatives sprang up whose action has spread across the world, namely: *Misereor*, *Adveniat* and *Renovabis*. Now you yourselves are here, dear young people from throughout the world. You represent those distant peoples who came to know Christ through the Magi and who were brought together as the new People of God, the Church, which gathers men and women from every culture. Today, it is your task, dear young people, to live and breathe the

Church's universality. Let yourselves be inflamed by the fire of the Spirit, so that a new Pentecost may be created among you and renew the Church. Through you, may other young people everywhere come to recognize in Christ the true answer to their deepest aspirations, and may they open their hearts to receive the Word of God Incarnate, who died and rose so that God might dwell among us and give us the truth, love and joy for which we are all yearning. God bless these days!

© Copyright 2005 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana

Copyright © Dicastero per la Comunicazione - Libreria Editrice Vaticana