



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY OF POPE BENEDICT XVI
TO PORTUGAL ON THE OCCASION OF THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE BEATIFICATION OF JACINTA AND FRANCISCO,
YOUNG SHEPHERDS OF FÁTIMA

MEETING WITH THE WORLD OF CULTURE

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

Cultural Center of Belém - Lisboa
Wednesday, 12 May 2010

(Video)

Dear Brother Bishops,
Distinguished Authorities,
Eminent representatives of the arts and sciences,
Dear friends,

I am very pleased to meet you, men and women devoted to research and expansion in the various fields of knowledge, and worthy representatives of the rich world of culture in Portugal. I take this occasion to express my deep esteem and appreciation of you and your work. The Government, represented here by the Minister for Culture, to whom I extend my respectful and warm greetings, gives praiseworthy support to the national priorities of the world of culture. I am grateful to all those who have made this meeting possible, particularly the Cultural Commission of the Bishops' Conference and its President, Bishop Manuel Clemente, whom I thank for his kind words of welcome and his presentation of the multifaceted reality of Portuguese culture, represented here by some of its most distinguished leaders. Their sentiments and expectations have been expressed by film director Manoel de Oliveira, a man venerable in years and in professional activity, to whom I extend my affectionate greetings and esteem. I also thank him for his kind

words, which have given a glimpse of the concerns and the mood of the soul of Portugal in this turbulent period of the life of society.

Today's culture is in fact permeated by a "tension" which at times takes the form of a "conflict" between the present and tradition. The dynamic movement of society gives absolute value to the present, isolating it from the cultural legacy of the past, without attempting to trace a path for the future. This emphasis on the "present" as a source of inspiration for the meaning of life, both individual and social, nonetheless clashes with the powerful cultural tradition of the Portuguese people, deeply marked by the millenary influence of Christianity and by a sense of global responsibility. This came to the fore in the adventure of the Discoveries and in the missionary zeal which shared the gift of faith with other peoples. The Christian ideal of universality and fraternity inspired this common adventure, even though influences from the Enlightenment and laicism also made themselves felt. This tradition gave rise to what could be called a "wisdom", that is to say, an understanding of life and history which included a corpus of ethical values and an "ideal" to be realized by Portugal, which has always sought to establish relations with the rest of the world.

The Church appears as the champion of a healthy and lofty tradition, whose rich contribution she sets at the service of society. Society continues to respect and appreciate her service to the common good but distances itself from that "wisdom" which is part of her legacy. This "conflict" between tradition and the present finds expression in the crisis of truth, yet only truth can provide direction and trace the path of a fulfilled existence both for individuals and for a people. Indeed, a people no longer conscious of its own truth ends up by being lost in the maze of time and history, deprived of clearly defined values and lacking great and clearly formulated goals. Dear friends, much still needs to be learned about the form in which the Church takes her place in the world, helping society to understand that the proclamation of truth is a service which she offers to society, and opening new horizons for the future, horizons of grandeur and dignity. The Church, in effect, has "a mission of truth to accomplish, in every time and circumstance, for a society that is attuned to man, to his dignity, to his vocation. [...] Fidelity to man requires fidelity to the truth, which alone is the guarantee of freedom (cf. Jn 8:32) and of the possibility of integral human development. For this reason the Church searches for truth, proclaims it tirelessly and recognizes it wherever it is manifested. This mission of truth is something that the Church can never renounce" (*Caritas in Veritate*, 9). For a society made up mainly of Catholics, and whose culture has been profoundly marked by Christianity, the search for truth apart from Christ proves dramatic. For Christians, Truth is divine; it is the eternal "Logos" which found human expression in Jesus Christ, who could objectively state: "I am the truth" (Jn 14:6). The Church, in her adherence to the eternal character of truth, is in the process of learning how to live with respect for other "truths" and for the truth of others. Through this respect, open to dialogue, new doors can be opened to the transmission of truth.

"The Church – wrote Pope Paul VI – must enter into dialogue with the world in which she lives. The Church becomes word, she becomes message, she becomes dialogue" (*Ecclesiam Suam*,

67). Dialogue, without ambiguity and marked by respect for those taking part, is a priority in today's world, and the Church does not intend to withdraw from it. A testimony to this is the Holy See's presence in several international organizations, as for example her presence at the Council of Europe's North-South Centre, established 20 years ago here in Lisbon, which is focused on intercultural dialogue with a view to promoting cooperation between Europe, the southern Mediterranean and Africa, and building a global citizenship based on human rights and civic responsibility, independent of ethnic origin or political allegiance, and respectful of religious beliefs. Given the reality of cultural diversity, people need not only to accept the existence of the culture of others, but also to aspire to be enriched by it and to offer to it whatever they possess that is good, true and beautiful.

Ours is a time which calls for the best of our efforts, prophetic courage and a renewed capacity to "point out new worlds to the world", to use the words of your national poet (Luís de Camões, *Os Lusíades*, II, 45). You who are representatives of culture in all its forms, forgers of thought and opinion, "thanks to your talent, have the opportunity to speak to the heart of humanity, to touch individual and collective sensibilities, to call forth dreams and hopes, to broaden the horizons of knowledge and of human engagement. [...] Do not be afraid to approach the first and last source of beauty, to enter into dialogue with believers, with those who, like yourselves, consider that they are pilgrims in this world and in history towards infinite Beauty!" (*Address to Artists*, 21 November 2009).

Precisely so as "to place the modern world in contact with the life-giving and perennial energies of the Gospel" (John XXIII, Apostolic Constitution *Humanae Salutis*, 3), the Second Vatican Council was convened. There the Church, on the basis of a renewed awareness of the Catholic tradition, took seriously and discerned, transformed and overcame the fundamental critiques that gave rise to the modern world, the Reformation and the Enlightenment. In this way the Church herself accepted and refashioned the best of the requirements of modernity by transcending them on the one hand, and on the other by avoiding their errors and dead ends. The Council laid the foundation for an authentic Catholic renewal and for a new civilization – "the civilization of love" – as an evangelical service to man and society.

Dear friends, the Church considers that her most important mission in today's culture is to keep alive the search for truth, and consequently for God; to bring people to look beyond penultimate realities and to seek those that are ultimate. I invite you to deepen your knowledge of God as he has revealed himself in Jesus Christ for our complete fulfilment. Produce beautiful things, but above all make your lives places of beauty. May Our Lady of Belém intercede for you, she who has been venerated down through the centuries by navigators, and is venerated today by the navigators of Goodness, Truth and Beauty.
