



The Holy See

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

WELCOME CEREMONY WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

*Plaza de Cibeles, Madrid
Thursday, 18 August 2011*

[[Video](#)]

Dear Friends,

Thank you for the kind words addressed to me by the young people representing the five continents. And I salute with affection all of you gathered here, young people from Oceania, Africa, America, Asia and Europe; and also those unable to be here. I always keep you very much in my heart and pray for you. God has given me the grace to see and hear you for myself and, as we gather together, to listen to his word.

In the reading which has just been proclaimed, we heard a passage from the Gospel which talks of welcoming the words of Jesus and putting them into practice. There are words which serve only to amuse, as fleeting as an empty breeze; others, to an extent, inform us; those of Jesus, on the other hand, must reach our hearts, take root and bloom there all our lives. If not, they remain empty and become ephemeral. They do not bring us to him and, as a result, Christ stays remote, just one voice among the many others around us which are so familiar. Furthermore, the Master who speaks teaches, not something learned from others, but that which he himself is, the only one who truly knows the path of man towards God, because he is the one who opened it up for us, he made it so that we might have authentic lives, lives which are always worth living, in every

circumstance, and which not even death can destroy. The Gospel continues, explaining these things with the evocative image of someone who builds on solid rock, resistant to the onslaught of adversity, and in contrast to someone who builds on sand - we would say today in what appears a paradise - but which collapses with the first gust of wind and falls into ruins.

Dear young people, listen closely to the words of the Lord, that they may be for you “spirit and life” (*Jn 6:63*), roots which nourish your being, a rule of life which likens us - poor in spirit, thirsting for justice, merciful, pure in heart, lovers of peace - to the person of Christ. Listen regularly every day as if he were the one friend who does not deceive, the one with whom we wish to share the path of life. Of course, you know that when we do not walk beside Christ our guide, we get lost on other paths, like the path of our blind and selfish impulses, or the path of flattering but self-serving suggestions, deceiving and fickle, which leave emptiness and frustration in their wake.

Use these days to know Christ better and to make sure that, rooted in him, your enthusiasm and happiness, your desire to go further, to reach the heights, even God himself, always hold a sure future, because the fullness of life has already been placed within you. Let that life grow with divine grace, generously and without half-measures, as you remain steadfast in your aim for holiness. And, in the face of our weaknesses which sometimes overwhelm us, we can rely on the mercy of the Lord who is always ready to help us again and who offers us pardon in the sacrament of Penance.

If you build on solid rock, not only your life will be solid and stable, but it will also help project the light of Christ shining upon those of your own age and upon the whole of humanity, presenting a valid alternative to all those who have fallen short, because the essentials in their lives were inconsistent; to all those who are content to follow fashionable ideas, they take shelter in the here and now, forgetting true justice, or they take refuge in their own opinions instead of seeking the simple truth.

Indeed, there are many who, creating their own gods, believe they need no roots or foundations other than themselves. They take it upon themselves to decide what is true or not, what is good and evil, what is just and unjust; who should live and who can be sacrificed in the interests of other preferences; leaving each step to chance, with no clear path, letting themselves be led by the whim of each moment. These temptations are always lying in wait. It is important not to give in to them because, in reality, they lead to something so evanescent, like an existence with no horizons, a liberty without God. We, on the other hand, know well that we have been created free, in the image of God, precisely so that we might be in the forefront of the search for truth and goodness, responsible for our actions, not mere blind executives, but creative co-workers in the task of cultivating and beautifying the work of creation. God is looking for a responsible interlocutor, someone who can dialogue with him and love him. Through Christ we can truly succeed and, established in him, we give wings to our freedom. Is this not the great reason for our joy? Isn't this the firm ground upon which to build the civilization of love and life, capable of

humanizing all of us?

Dear friends: be prudent and wise, build your lives upon the firm foundation which is Christ. This wisdom and prudence will guide your steps, nothing will make you fear and peace will reign in your hearts. Then you will be blessed and happy and your happiness will influence others. They will wonder what the secret of your life is and they will discover that the rock which underpins the entire building and upon which rests your whole existence is the very person of Christ, your friend, brother and Lord, the Son of God incarnate, who gives meaning to all the universe.

He died for us all, rising that we might have life, and now, from the throne of the Father, he accompanies all men and women, watching continually over each one of us.

I commend the fruits of [this World Youth Day](#) to the most holy Virgin Mary, who said “Yes” to the will of God, and teaches us a unique example of fidelity to her divine son, whom she followed to his death upon the Cross. Let us meditate upon this more deeply in the *Stations of the Cross*. And let us pray that, like her, our “Yes” to Christ today may also be an unconditional “Yes” to his friendship, both at the end of this Day and throughout our entire lives. Thank you very much.