



The Holy See

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

THE WAY OF THE CROSS

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

Plaza de Cibeles, Madrid
Friday, 19 August 2011

Dear Young People,

We have celebrated this Way of the Cross with fervour and devotion, following Christ along the path of his passion and death. The commentaries of the Little Sisters of the Cross, who serve the poor and most needy, have helped us enter into the mystery of Christ's glorious Cross, wherein is found God's true wisdom which judges the world and judges those who consider themselves wise (cf. *1 Cor 1:17-19*). We have also been assisted on this journey to Calvary by our contemplation of these wonderful images from the religious patrimony of the Spanish dioceses. In these images, faith and art combine so as to penetrate our heart and summon us to conversion. When faith's gaze is pure and authentic, beauty places itself at its service and is able to depict the mysteries of our salvation in such a way as to move us profoundly and transform our hearts, as Saint Teresa of Jesus herself experienced while contemplating an image of the wounded Christ (cf. *Autobiography*, 9:1).

As we were making our way with Jesus towards the place of his sacrifice on Mount Calvary, the words of Saint Paul came to mind: "Christ loved me and gave himself for me" (*Gal 2:20*). In the face of such disinterested love, we find ourselves asking, filled with wonder and gratitude: What can we do for him? What response shall we give him? Saint John puts it succinctly: "By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (*1*

Jn 3:16). Christ's passion urges us to take upon our own shoulders the sufferings of the world, in the certainty that God is not distant or far removed from man and his troubles. On the contrary, he became one of us "in order to *suffer with* man in an utterly real way — in flesh and blood ... hence in all human suffering we are joined by one who experiences and carries that suffering *with us*; hence *con-solatio* is present in all suffering, the consolation of God's compassionate love — and so the star of hope rises" (*Spe Salvi*, 39).

Dear young friends, may Christ's love for us increase your joy and encourage you to go in search of those less fortunate. You are open to the idea of sharing your lives with others, so be sure not to pass by on the other side in the face of human suffering, for it is here that God expects you to give of your very best: your capacity for love and compassion. The different forms of suffering that have unfolded before our eyes in the course of this Way of the Cross are the Lord's way of summoning us to spend our lives following in his footsteps and becoming signs of his consolation and salvation. "To suffer with the other and for others; to suffer for the sake of truth and justice; to suffer out of love and in order to become a person who truly loves — these are fundamental elements of humanity, and to abandon them would destroy man himself" (*ibid.*).

Let us eagerly welcome these teachings and put them into practice. Let us look upon Christ, hanging on the harsh wood of the Cross, and let us ask him to teach us this mysterious wisdom of the Cross, by which man lives. The Cross was not a sign of failure, but an expression of self-giving in love that extends even to the supreme sacrifice of one's life. The Father wanted to show his love for us through the embrace of his crucified Son: crucified out of love. The Cross, by its shape and its meaning, represents this love of both the Father and the Son for men. Here we recognize the icon of supreme love, which teaches us to love what God loves and in the way that he loves: this is the Good News that gives hope to the world.

Let us turn our gaze now to the Virgin Mary, who was given to us on Calvary to be our Mother, and let us ask her to sustain us with her loving protection along the path of life, particularly when we pass through the night of suffering, so that we may be able to remain steadfast, as she did, at the foot of the Cross. Thank you very much.