



The Holy See

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

DEPARTURE CEREMONY

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

*International Airport of Madrid Barajas
Sunday, 21 August 2011*

*Your Majesties,
Distinguished National, Autonomous Regional and Local Authorities,
Your Eminence the Archbishop of Madrid and President of the Spanish Episcopal Conference,
Your Eminences and Dear Brother Bishops,
Dear Friends,*

The time has come for us to say good-bye. These days spent in Madrid, in the company of so many young people from Spain and from throughout the world, will remain deeply etched in my mind and heart.

Your Majesty, the Pope felt at home in Spain! And the young people who were the heart of this World Youth Day found a warm welcome here and in the many cities and towns of the country, which they were able to visit in the days before these celebrations.

I thank Your Majesty for your gracious words and for your presence at my arrival in Spain and now at my departure. I thank the national, autonomous regional and local authorities for the helpfulness and understanding which they showed before this international event. I also thank the thousands of volunteers who ensured the orderly unfolding of the many activities of this meeting: the various literary, musical, cultural and religious events of the *Festival joven*, the catecheses given by the

Bishops and the main events in the presence of the Successor of Peter. I thank the police and security forces, and all those who helped by providing a wide variety of services: from the music and the liturgy to the details of transportation, health care and meals.

Spain is a great nation whose soundly open, pluralistic and respectful society is capable of moving forward without surrendering its profoundly religious and Catholic soul. In these days, it once more made this clear, revealing its technical and human resources in the service of an undertaking of immense consequence and promise: that of helping young people to become more deeply rooted in Jesus Christ, our Saviour.

A particular word of gratitude is due to the organizers of World Youth Day: to the Cardinal President of the [Pontifical Council for the Laity](#) and all the personnel of that Office, to the Archbishop of Madrid, Cardinal Antonio María Rouco Varela, his Auxiliary Bishops and the whole Archdiocese, and in particular to the General Coordinator, Monsignor César Augusto Franco Martínez, and the many generous members of his staff. The Bishops worked generously and diligently in their Dioceses to prepare for the celebrations, together with their priests, consecrated persons and the lay faithful. To all I express my gratitude and I pray that the Lord will bless your apostolic labors.

Nor can I fail to offer heartfelt thanks to the young people for having come to the World Youth Day and for their joyful, enthusiastic and intense presence. To them I say thank you, and I congratulate you for the witness which you gave in Madrid and in the other cities of Spain in which you stayed. Now I ask you to spread throughout the world the profound and joyful experience of faith which you had here in this noble country. Share your joy especially with those who would have liked to come but were unable to do so for various reasons, with all those who were praying for you and with all those whose hearts were touched by these celebrations. By your closeness and your witness, help your friends to discover that loving Christ means living life to the full.

I leave Spain very happy and grateful to everyone. But above all I am grateful to God, our Lord, who allowed me to celebrate these days so filled with enthusiasm and grace, so charged with dynamism and hope. The feast of faith which we have shared enables us to look forward with great confidence in Providence, which guides the Church across the seas of history. That is why she continues to be young and full of life, even as she confronts challenging situations. This is the work of the Holy Spirit, who makes Jesus Christ present in the hearts of young people in every age and shows them the grandeur of the divine vocation given to every man and woman. We were also able to see how the grace of Christ tears down the walls and overcomes the barriers which sin erects between peoples and generations, in order to make all mankind a single family which acknowledges its one Father and which cultivates, by work and respect, all that he has given us in creation.

Young people readily respond when one proposes to them, in sincerity and truth, an encounter

with Jesus Christ, the one Redeemer of humanity. Now those young people are returning home as missionaries of the Gospel, “rooted and built up in Christ, and firm in the faith”, and they will need to be helped on their way. So I urge Bishops, priests, Religious and Christian educators in particular, to care for those young people who want to respond enthusiastically to the Lord’s call. There is no reason to lose heart in the face of the various obstacles we encounter in some countries. The yearning for God which the Creator has placed in the hearts of young people is more powerful than all of these, as is the power from on high which gives divine strength to those who follow the Master and who seek in him nourishment for life. Do not be afraid to present to young people the message of Jesus Christ in all its integrity, and to invite them to celebrate the sacraments by which he gives us a share in his own life.

Your Majesty, before returning to Rome, I would like to assure the people of Spain of my constant prayers, especially for married couples and families who are facing various kinds of difficulties, the needy and the infirm, the elderly and children, as well as those who have no work. I pray in particular of the young people of Spain. I am sure that they will contribute the best they have to offer through their faith in Christ, so that this great country can face the challenges of the present hour and can continue along the paths of peace, solidarity, justice and freedom. Along with these intentions, I entrust the sons and daughters of this noble land to the intercession of the Virgin Mary, our heavenly Mother, and to them all I willingly impart my blessing. May the joy of the Lord always fill your hearts. Thank you.