



The Holy See

PASTORAL VISIT TO THE ARCHDIOCESE OF MILAN

AND 7th WORLD MEETING OF FAMILIES

(1-3 JUNE 2012)

MEETING WITH THE CANDIDATES FOR CONFIRMATION

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE BENEDICT XVI

"Meazza" Stadium, San Siro

Saturday, 2 June 2012

[\[Video\]](#)

Dear Young People,

It gives me great joy to be able to meet you during [my Visit](#) to your city. You are the champions today in this famous football stadium! I greet Cardinal Angelo Scola, your Archbishop, and thank him for his words. My thanks also go to Fr Samuele Marelli. I greet your friend who has welcomed me on behalf of you all. I am glad to greet the Episcopal Vicars who, on the Archbishop's behalf, have administered or will administer Confirmation to you.

A special "thank you" to the *Fondazione Oratori Milanesi*, which has organized this meeting, to your priests, to all the catechists, to your teachers and sponsors, as well as to all those in the individual parish communities who have been your travelling companions and have witnessed to faith in Jesus Christ, dead and risen, and alive.

Dear young people, you are either preparing to receive the sacrament of Confirmation or you have just received it. I know that you have completed a good formation process, this year entitled: "The Spectacle of the Spirit". Helped by this itinerary with its various stages, you have learned to recognize the wonderful things that the Holy Spirit has done and is doing in your life and in all

those who say “yes” to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. You have discovered the great value of Baptism, the first of the sacraments, the entrance gate to Christian life.

You received it thanks to your parents, who, with your Godparents, professed the Creed on your behalf and committed themselves to raise you in the faith. This was an immense grace for you — as it was for me — so long ago! From that moment, reborn through water and the Holy Spirit, you belonged to the family of God’s children, you became Christians, members of the Church.

Now you have grown up and you yourselves can say your personal “yes” to God, a free and informed “yes”. The sacrament of Confirmation strengthens Baptism and pours out the Holy Spirit upon you in abundance. You yourselves, full of gratitude, now have the possibility of accepting his important gifts that help you on your way through life to become faithful and courageous witnesses of Jesus. The gifts of the Spirit are stupendous realities that enable you to be formed as Christians, to live out the Gospel and to be active members of the community. I briefly recall these gifts, of which the Prophet Isaiah and then Jesus have already spoken to us:

— the first gift is *wisdom*, which enables you to see how good and great the Lord is and, as the word says, fills your life with flavour, so that, as Jesus said, you may be “salt of the earth”;

— then there is the gift of *understanding*, so that you may understand in depth the word of God and the truth of the faith;

— next is the gift of *counsel*, which will guide you to the discovery of God’s plan for your life, the life of each one of you;

— the gift of *fortitude*, in order to overcome the temptations of evil and to do good always, even at the cost of making a sacrifice;

— then comes the gift of *knowledge*, not knowledge in the technical sense, as is taught at university, but knowledge in the deepest sense which teaches you to find in creation the signs and impressions of God, to understand how God speaks in every epoch and speaks to me, and to inspire your daily work with the Gospel; to understand that there is depth, and to understand this depth and thus give a taste to work, even work that is difficult;

— another gift is that of *piety*, which keeps alive in the heart the flame of love for our Father who is in heaven, so as to pray to him every day with the trust and tenderness of beloved children; of not forgetting the fundamental reality of the world and of my life: that God exists and that God knows me and expects my response to his project;

— and finally the seventh and last gift is *fear of God* —we spoke earlier of fear — fear of God does not mean being afraid of him but feeling profound respect for him, the respect of God’s will which

is the true plan of my life and the way on which personal and community life can be good. Today too with all the crises that there are in the world, we see how important it is that each one may respect this will of God impressed in our hearts and by which we must live; and so this fear of God is a desire to do good, to do what is true, to do God's will.

Dear young people, the whole of Christian life is a journey, it is like following a path that winds up a mountain — therefore it is not always easy but climbing a mountain is something beautiful — in the company of Jesus. With these precious gifts your friendship with him will become even truer and closer. It is continually nourished with the sacrament of the Eucharist, in which we receive his Body and his Blood. For this reason I invite you always to take part joyfully and faithfully in Sunday Mass, when the entire community gathers together to pray, to listen to the word of God and to take part in the Eucharistic sacrifice.

And also receive the sacrament of Penance and Confession: it is an encounter with Jesus who forgives our sins and helps us to do good. Receiving the gift, starting out anew is a great gift in life, knowing that I am free, that I can start again, that everything is forgiven. Then do not omit your personal, daily prayer. Learn to converse with the Lord, confide in him, tell him of your joys and anxieties and ask him for enlightenment and support for your journey.

Dear friends, you are fortunate because in your parishes there are oratories, after-school recreation and prayer centres, a great gift of the Diocese of Milan. An "oratory", as the word says, is a place for prayer, but also for being together in the joy of faith with catechesis and games and where duties and other kinds of activities are organized; where one learns to live, I would say. Attend your oratory regularly to grow increasingly in knowledge and in the following of the Lord! These seven gifts of the Holy Spirit develop in this very community where life is lived in truth, with God. In the family, be obedient to your parents, listen to the instructions they give you, so as to increase, like Jesus, "in wisdom and in stature, and in favour with God and man" (Lk 2:51-52).

Lastly, do not be lazy but be hard-working boys and girls and young people, especially in your studies, with a view to your future life. It is your daily duty and is a great opportunity you have in order to develop and to prepare for the future. Be available and generous to others, overcoming the temptation to focus on yourselves, because selfishness is the enemy of true joy. If you now taste the beauty of belonging to Jesus' community, you too will be able to make your contribution to increase it and will be able to invite others to belong to it. Allow me also to tell you that every day, and also here today, the Lord calls you to great things. Be open to what he suggests to you and if he should call you to follow him on the path of the priesthood or of the consecrated life, do not say "no" to him! It would be a mistaken laziness! Jesus will fill your heart for your whole life!

Dear young men, dear young women, I tell you, forcefully, strive for high ideals, everyone can attain a high standard, not only a few! Be holy! But is it possible to be holy at your age? I answer you: of course it is! St Ambrose too, a great Saint of your city, says so in one of his works where

he writes "Every age is mature for Christ" (*De Virginitate*, 40).

And above all the witness borne by so many Saints the same age as you, such as Domenico Savio and Maria Goretti, demonstrate it. Holiness is the normal path for Christians; it is not reserved for a few chosen ones but is open to all. Naturally, with the light and strength of the Holy Spirit whom we will not lack if we hold out our hands and open our hearts! And with the guidance of our Mother. Who is our Mother? She is Mary, the Mother of Jesus. Before dying on the Cross Jesus entrusted all of us to her. May the Virgin Mary therefore always preserve the beauty of your "yes" to Jesus, her Son, the great and faithful Friend of our life. So may it be!

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