

The Pope's Message for the 24th World Youth Day



(ANS – Vatican City: March 5, 2009) –“We have set our hope on the living God” (1 Tim 4:10) is the theme of the message which Pope Benedict XVI addresses to youth for the 24th World Youth Day, to be celebrated at diocesan level on April 5, Palm Sunday.

Recalling the meeting in Sydney, days in which “the joy of celebration and spiritual enthusiasm experienced during those few days was an eloquent sign of the presence of the Spirit of Christ,” the Pope points out the path toward the 26th World Youth Day, to be held in Madrid in 2011, which will have for the theme ““Rooted and built up in Jesus Christ, firm in the faith.” From this year’s theme will follow one in 2010 inspired by the question put to Jesus by the rich young man: "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" (Mark 10:17).

The invitation given to the young people in Sydney to allow themselves to be “shaped by him in order to be messengers of divine love,” is followed by the “question of hope,” which is “truly central to our lives as human beings and our mission as Christians, especially in these times,” a hope which is “firm and reliable.”

Human experience leads the believer to recognize that his hope "can only be God, who encompasses the whole of reality and who can bestow upon us what we, by ourselves, cannot attain" (Spe Salvi, n. 31).

The crisis of hope is more likely to affect the younger generations. “My dear young friends, I have in mind so many of your contemporaries who have been wounded by life. They often suffer from personal immaturity

caused by dysfunctional family situations, by permissive and libertarian elements in their education, and by difficult and traumatic experience.”

Therefore the Pope invites young people to open themselves to the Hope who is Christ, and like Saint Paul, “to become credible witnesses to Christian hope.”

“Just as he once encountered the young Paul, Jesus also wants to encounter each one of you, my dear young people. Indeed, even before we desire it, such an encounter is ardently desired by Jesus Christ.” Benedict XVI indicates the means by which to meet Christ, persevering prayer, especially praying together, and active participation in the sacraments.

Becoming disciples of Christ, the young people “will be able to help form Christian communities that are filled with love, like those described in the Acts of the Apostles.” The Pope invites the young not to let difficulties discourage them, to be “patient and persevering so as to overcome the natural youthful tendency to rush ahead and to want everything immediately.”

Follow the example of Paul, the Pope exhorts the young, and be witnesses to the Risen Christ, making him known, among your own age group and among adults, acting in accordance with your faith, always prepared to "make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you" (1 Pet 3:15).