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Cardinal Expresses Hope For Youth Day

Urges Renewed Evangelization of Country and World

ROME, APRIL 7, 2009 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- The archbishop of Madrid told World Youth Day organizers that the 2011 event will be an opportunity to renew Spain's fidelity to the Church.

Cardinal Antonio María Rouco Varela said this Saturday to the youth event organizers on the second day of their meeting in Rome. The gathering ended with Palm Sunday Mass, after which a Sydney delegation handed over the World Youth Day Cross to the Madrid group.

In his address, the cardinal reviewed the history of Christianity in Spain, and the fruits that evangelization has given the country and the world. He said that in Spain the seed of the Gospel sprouted rapidly, but now the Church must address new challenges if evangelization is to continue to bear fruit.

He explained how evangelization began in his country almost 2,000 years ago, with the Apostle James, whose tomb, according to tradition, is in Santiago de Compostela, where the 1989 youth day was held.

The archbishop of Madrid mentioned that the Church in Spain has faced challenges such as the Muslim invasion, which began in 711 and lasted almost eight centuries.

He said that "when the great break of the unity of Europe took place with the Protestant Reformation, Spain kept her unity without a single fissure and lived through one of the most fruitful times of her missionary activity: the foundation of the Jesuits and the renewal of Carmel with St. Teresa of Jesus."

Modern evangelization

Cardinal Rouco recalled Pope John Paul II's last trip to Spain, and his words while bidding the country farewell: "Evangelized Spain. Evangelizing Spain. This is the way."

He recalled Pope John Paul II's five visits to his country, which "were marked by the hope that the nation would not cease to live faithful to the Gospel, accepted from the beginning, a Gospel that would renew and rejuvenate her."

The cardinal affirmed that "the Archdiocese of Madrid has lived these years very centered on its pastoral activity in implementing the program of the new evangelization of young people and the family."

He underlined the appeal made repeatedly by Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI, urging Spain to continue her evangelizing activity, both internally and externally.

He explained that this is important "because we are living and suffering through a sort of process of secularization, which profoundly affects the deepest aspects and the most sensitive fabric of the ecclesial body of Spain."

Cardinal Rouco added: "Throughout history Spain has been considered a confessional state, except for the period of the second republic (1931-1936). Now it is no longer so, but we do believe that the influence of ideas continues to freely mark Spaniards' hearts."

Springtime

With World Youth Day in 2011, he stated, the Church in Spain seeks a "new spring of the Church," one of the great challenges being "the demographic decline," especially with regard to youth and children.

The cardinal also mentioned the new charisms that have manifested themselves in his country in recent years, which have resulted in "a great vocational flowering in the secular apostolate and contemplative life."

He continued: "I would like to mention two examples: the Neo-Catechumenal Way, which arose in the in 60s, and Opus Dei, which was born almost 100 years ago."

The world's greatest poverty, he said, is its "break with God." Hence, he exhorted all the members of the Church in Spain to work so that her "missionary vocation will flower again."

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