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Papal Message to Madrid Youth

"Go in the Footsteps of Christ"

VATICAN CITY, APRIL 6, 2009 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- Here is a translation of the address Benedict XVI delivered Monday to young people of the Archdiocese of Madrid, who are in Rome to receive the cross for World Youth Day 2011.

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Dear Friends:

It is a very great joy for me to receive in this audience such a numerous group from Madrid and Spain, who have come to collect the youth cross, which will be taken to several cities until World Youth Day in Madrid, in the year 2011. I cordially greet the archbishop of Madrid, Cardinal Antonio María Rouco Varela, who presides over this pilgrimage, the general coordinator of Madrid, Auxiliary Bishop César Augusto Franco Martínez, and the other bishops, priests and catechists who have wished to be here. I especially greet you with affection, dear young people, who, on taking the cross, confess your faith in him who loves you without measure, the Lord Jesus, whose Paschal mystery we celebrate in these holy days. As I said on another occasion, "faith, in its way, needs to see and touch. The encounter with the cross, which is touched and carried, is transformed into an interior encounter with Him who died on the cross for us. The encounter with the cross awakens in the depth of young people the memory of the God who willed to become man and suffer with us" (To the Members of the Roman Curia, Dec. 22, 2008). I am happy to know that this cross you have received will be taken in procession on Good Friday through the streets of Madrid to be acclaimed and venerated.

Therefore, I encourage you to discover in the cross the infinite measure of Christ's love, and thus be able to say, with St. Paul: "I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20). Yes, dear young people, Christ gave himself for each one of you and loves you in a unique and personal way. Respond to Christ's love by offering him your life with love. In this way, the preparation for World Youth Day, whose works you have begun with much hope and dedication, will be recompensed with the fruits intended by these Days: to renew and strengthen the experience of the encounter with Christ who died and rose from the dead for us.

Go in the footsteps of Christ. He is your end, your way and also your prize. In the motto I chose for Madrid's Day, the Apostle Paul invites us to walk "rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith" (Colossians 2:7). Life is a journey, certainly. But it is not an uncertain journey without a fixed destiny; it leads to Christ, the end of human life and history. On this journey you will meet with Him who gave his life for love, and opens to you the doors of eternal life. I invite you, therefore, to be formed in the faith that gives meaning to your life and strengthens your convictions, so as to be able to remain firm in the difficulties of each day. Moreover, I exhort you, on your journey to Christ, to be able to attract your young friends, your study and work companions, so that they too will know him and confess him as Lord of their lives. To do this, let the force from on high, which is within you, the Holy Spirit, manifest himself with his immense attractiveness.

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Young people of today need to discover the new life that comes from God, to be satiated by the truth that has its source in Christ who died and was resurrected and who the Church has received as a treasure for all men.

Dear young people, this time of preparation for the youth day of Madrid is, in addition, an extraordinary occasion to experience the grace of belonging to the Church, Body of Christ. World Youth Days manifest the dynamism of the Church and her eternal youth. He who loves Christ, loves the Church with the same passion, as she enables us to live in a close relationship with the Lord. Hence, cultivate the initiatives that enable young people to feel they are members of the Church, in full communion with their pastors and with the Successor of Peter. Pray in common, opening the doors of your parishes, associations and movements so that all can feel at home in the Church, in which they are loved with the very love of God. Celebrate and live your faith with immense joy, which is a gift of the Spirit. In this way your hearts and your friends will prepare to celebrate the great feast that youth day is and we will all experience a new epiphany of the youth of the Church.

In these very beautiful days of Holy Week, which we began yesterday, I encourage you to contemplate Christ in the mysteries of his Passion, Death and Resurrection. In them you will find what surpasses all wisdom and knowledge, namely, the love of God manifested in Christ. Learn from him, who did not come "to be served but to serve, and to give his life as ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). This is the style of Christ's love, marked with the sign of the glorious cross, in which Christ is exalted, in the sight of all, with his open heart, so that the world can look and see, through his perfect humanity, the love that saves us. Thus the cross becomes the very sign of life, as on it Christ overcomes sin and death through the total giving of himself. That is why we must embrace and adore the cross of the Lord, make it our own, accept its weight as the Cyrenean to participate in the only thing that can redeem the whole of humanity (cf. Colossians 1:24). In baptism you were marked with the cross of Christ and you belong to him totally. Make yourselves ever more worthy of it and never be ashamed of this supreme sign of love.

With this profound Christian attitude, you will carry forward the works of preparation for World Youth Day with success and fruitfulness because, as St. Paul says, we can do all things in him who strengthens us (cf. Philippians 4:13). And, manifested to us in Christ crucified is the strength and wisdom of God (cf. 1 Colossians 1:24). Let yourselves be invaded by this strength and wisdom, communicate it to others and, under the protection of the Most Holy Virgin Mary, prepare the World Youth Day with dedication and joy which will make of Madrid a place radiant of faith and life, where young people from the whole world celebrate Christ with enthusiasm.

Take my affectionate greeting to your families, friends and companions who have been unable to come today, whom I also bless from my heart.

Happy Easter

Thank you very much.

[Translation by ZENIT]

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