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On Preparation for World Youth Day in Madrid

"The Pilgrim Cross Brings the Message of Christ to All Youth"

VATICAN CITY, APRIL 5, 2009 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- Here is a translation of the address Benedict XVI delivered today after Palm Sunday Mass, before praying the midday Angelus with those gathered in St. Peter's Square. During his address, a delegation from Sydney handed over the World Youth Day Cross to a group of young people from Madrid.

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Yesterday, April 4, the U.N.'s 4th international day for increasing anti-personnel mine awareness was observed. At the present moment, ten years after the treaty banning the use of these devices came into effect, and after the treaty banning cluster bombs was recently presented for signatures, I would like to encourage the countries who have still not yet done so to sign without delay these important instruments of international humanitarian law, which the Holy See has always supported. Moreover, I express my support for any measure intended to guarantee necessary assistance for the victims of these devastating weapons.

Furthermore, I would like to remember, with deep sorrow, our African brothers and sisters, who met their deaths a few days ago in the Mediterranean Sea, while they were trying to find refuge in Europe. We cannot resign ourselves to such tragedies that, unfortunately, repeat themselves time and time again! The phenomenon's dimensions make coordinated strategies between the European Union and African countries more and more urgent, as well as the adoption of adequate humanitarian measures to impede migrants having recourse to lawless traffickers. As I pray for the victims, that the Lord welcome them into his peace, I would like to observe that this problem, subsequently aggravated by the global crisis, will be solved only when African populations can relieve themselves from suffering and wars with the help of the international community.

I now address a special greeting to the 150 delegates -- bishops, priests and lay people -- who in recent days participated in the international meeting on the World Youth Days, organized by the Pontifical Council for the Laity. Thus, there begins the journey of preparation toward the next international gathering of youth, which will take place in August 2011 in Madrid. I have already indicated its theme: "Rooted and Built Up in Christ, Solid in Faith," which is taken from Colossians 2:7. As is tradition, the young people from Australia will give to the young people from Spain the World Youth Day cross, the "pilgrim cross," which brings the message of Christ to all the youth of the world. This "passing on of witness" takes on a highly symbolic value, with which we express immense gratitude to God for the gifts received at the great meeting in Sydney and for those that we will receive at the meeting in Madrid. Tomorrow the cross, accompanied by the icon of the Virgin Mary, will depart for the Spanish capital, and will be present there for the great Good Friday procession. After this a long pilgrimage through the dioceses of Spain will begin, and will end again in Madrid in the summer of 2011. May this cross and this icon of Mary be for all a sign of Christ's invincible love and that of his and our Mother!

[Translation by Joseph G. Trabbic]

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[The Pope greeted the pilgrims in various languages. In English, he said:]

I greet all the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors here this Palm Sunday, when we recall the humble entry into Jerusalem of Jesus, our King and Messiah. With vivid memories of my visit to Sydney for World Youth Day, I greet Cardinal George Pell, Archbishop of Sydney, and Bishops Anthony Fisher and Julian Porteous, Auxiliary Bishops of Sydney, who are here together with a large group of young Australians in order to consign to their counterparts from Madrid the World Youth Day Cross and Icon of Our Lady. May the great events of Holy Week strengthen your faith and inspire you to be humble witnesses of charity. Upon each of you present and your families, I invoke God's blessings of peace and wisdom.

And now let us accompany with prayer the handing over of the Cross.

[After the ceremony of the handing over of the World Youth Day Cross and Icon, he said:]

And now we turn with faith to the Virgin Mary, so that she will always watch over the path of the young and that she will help us to live Holy Week well.

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