

MESSAGE FOR WORLD YOUTH DAY 2008

VATICAN CITY, JUL 26, 2007 (VIS) - Benedict XVI's Message for 23rd World Youth Day, due to be held in Sydney, Australia from July 15 to 20, 2008, has as its theme: "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses" (Acts of the Apostles 1, 8).

The Message is dated July 20 in Lorenzago di Cadore, Italy. Given below are excerpts from the English translation, which was made public yesterday:

1. The XXIII World Youth Day

"The underlying theme of the spiritual preparation for our meeting in Sydney is the Holy Spirit and mission. ... In this message I gladly offer you an outline for meditation that you can explore during this year of preparation. In this way you can test the quality of your faith in the Holy Spirit, rediscover it if it is lost, strengthen it if it has become weak."

2. The promise of the Holy Spirit in the Bible

"Attentive listening to the Word of God concerning the mystery and action of the Holy Spirit opens us up to great and inspiring insights. ... The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the nascent Church was the fulfilment of a promise made much earlier by God, announced and prepared throughout the Old Testament."

"In 'the fullness of time,' the angel of the Lord announced to the Virgin of Nazareth that the Holy Spirit, 'the power of the Most High,' would come upon her and overshadow her. The Child to be born would be holy and would be called Son of God. ... Before His death on the Cross, He would tell His disciples several times about the coming of the Holy Spirit, the 'Consoler' Whose mission would be to bear witness to Him and to assist believers by teaching them and guiding them to the fullness of Truth."

3. Pentecost, the point of departure for the Church's mission

On the day of Pentecost "the Holy Spirit renewed the Apostles from within, filling them with a power that would give them courage to go out and boldly proclaim that 'Christ has died and is risen!' Freed from all fear, they began to speak openly with self-confidence. These frightened fishermen had become courageous heralds of the Gospel. Even their enemies could not understand how 'uneducated and ordinary men' could show such courage and endure difficulties, suffering and persecution with joy. Nothing could stop them."

4. The Holy Spirit, soul of the Church and principle of communion

"The Holy Spirit is the highest gift of God to humankind, and therefore the supreme testimony of His love for us, a love that is specifically expressed as the 'yes to life' that God wills for each of His creatures. This 'yes to life' finds its fullness in Jesus of Nazareth and in His victory over evil by means of the redemption."

5. The Holy Spirit as "Teacher of the interior life"

"My dear young friends, the Holy Spirit continues today to act with power in the Church, and the fruits of the Spirit are abundant in the measure in which we are ready to open up to this power that makes all things new. ... However, at this point a question naturally arises: who is the Holy Spirit for me? It is a fact that for many Christians He is still the 'great unknown.' This is why, as we prepare for the next World Youth Day, I wanted to invite you to come to know the Holy Spirit more deeply at a personal level."

"The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the love of the Father and of the Son, is the Source of life that makes us holy. ... Nevertheless, it is not enough to know the Spirit; we must welcome Him as the guide of our souls, as the 'Teacher of the interior life' Who introduces us to the Mystery of the Trinity, because He alone can open us up to faith and allow us to live it each day to the full. The Spirit impels us forward towards others, enkindles in us the fire of love, makes us missionaries of God's charity."

6. The Sacraments of Confirmation and the Eucharist

"Faith is born and is strengthened within us through the Sacraments, particularly those of Christian initiation: Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist. ... This truth concerning the three Sacraments that initiate our lives as Christians is perhaps neglected in the faith life of many Christians. They view them as events that took place in the past and have no real significance for today, like roots that lack life-giving nourishment. ... Yet it is through the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and then, in an ongoing way, the Eucharist, that the Holy Spirit makes us children of the Father, brothers and sisters of Jesus, members of His Church, capable of a true witness to the Gospel, and able to savour the joy of faith."

"Nowadays it is particularly necessary to rediscover the Sacrament of Confirmation and its important place in our spiritual growth. ... Confirmation gives us special strength to witness to and glorify God with our whole lives. It makes us intimately aware of our belonging to the Church, the 'Body of Christ,' of which we are all living members, in solidarity with one another."

"I would like to add a word about the Eucharist. In order to grow in our Christian life, we need to be nourished by the Body and Blood of Christ. ... 'Source and summit' of the Church's life, the Eucharist is a 'perpetual Pentecost' since every

time we celebrate Mass we receive the Holy Spirit Who unites us more deeply with Christ and transforms us into Him."

7. The need and urgency of mission

"Many young people view their lives with apprehension and raise many questions about their future. They anxiously ask: How can we fit into a world marked by so many grave injustices and so much suffering? ... How can we give full meaning to life? ... Let us not forget that the greater the gift of God - and the gift of the Spirit of Jesus is the greatest of all - so much the greater is the world's need to receive it and therefore the greater and the more exciting is the Church's mission to bear credible witness to it. ... Once again I repeat that only Christ can fulfil the most intimate aspirations that are in the heart of each person. Only Christ can humanize humanity and lead it to its 'divinization.' Through the power of His Spirit He instils divine charity within us, and this makes us capable of loving our neighbour and ready to be of service. ... There are those who think that to present the precious treasure of faith to people who do not share it means being intolerant towards them, but this is not the case, because to present Christ is not to impose Him.

"Moreover, two thousand years ago twelve Apostles gave their lives to make Christ known and loved. Throughout the centuries since then, the Gospel has continued to spread by means of men and women inspired by that same missionary fervour. Today too there is a need for disciples of Christ Who give unstintingly of their time and energy to serve the Gospel. ... In particular, I assure you that the Spirit of Jesus today is inviting you young people to be bearers of the good news of Jesus to your contemporaries. ... You know the ideals, the language, and also the wounds, the expectations, and at the same time the desire for goodness felt by your contemporaries. This opens up the vast world of young people's emotions, work, education, expectations, and suffering. Each one of you must have the courage to promise the Holy Spirit that you will bring one young person to Jesus Christ in the way you consider best, knowing how to 'give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope, but [to] do it with gentleness and reverence'."

8. Invoking a 'new Pentecost' upon the world

"My dear young friends, I hope to see very many of you in Sydney in July 2008. ... Together we shall invoke the Holy Spirit, confidently asking God for the gift of a new Pentecost for the Church and for humanity in the third millennium."