



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO MADRID
ON THE OCCASION OF THE 26th WORLD YOUTH DAY
18-21 AUGUST 2011

***INTERVIEW OF THE HOLY FATHER BENEDICT XVI
WITH THE JOURNALISTS DURING THE FLIGHT TO MADRID***

Papal Flight
Thursday, 18 August 2011

Fr Federico Lombardi, SJ: *Holy Father, we have come to the 26th World Youth Day, the 12th to be celebrated with an important world meeting. [John Paul II](#), who invented the Youth Days, is now Blessed and is the official Patron of this World Youth Day in Madrid. At the beginning of your Pontificate people wondered whether you would continue along the same lines as your Predecessor. This is now your third World Youth Day, after [Cologne](#) and [Sydney](#). How do you view the significance of these events in the pastoral “strategy” of the universal Church in the third millennium?*

The Holy Father: Dear friends, good morning! I am glad to be going to Spain with you for this great event. After personally experiencing two WYDs, I can only say that [Pope John Paul II](#) was truly inspired when he created this important meeting of young people and of the world with the Lord.

I would say that these [World Youth Days](#) are a sign, a cascade of light; they give visibility to the faith and to God’s presence in the world, and thus create the courage to be believers. Believers often feel isolated in this world, almost lost. Here they see that they are not alone, that there is a great network of faith, a great community of believers in the world, that it is beautiful to live in this universal friendship. And thus, it seems to me, friendships are born, friendships beyond the confines of different cultures and different countries. And this birth of a universal network of friendship that links the world and God, is an important reality for the future of humanity, for the life of humanity today.

Naturally, the WYD cannot be an isolated event; it is part of a larger process, it should be prepared for by this journey of the Cross that transmigrates to different countries and already unites young people in the sign of the cross and in the marvellous sign of Our Lady. So it is that the preparation for the World Youth Day is of course far more than the technical plan for an event with a great many technical hitches; it is an inner preparation, a starting out towards others, together towards God. Then, later, the foundation of groups of friends follows, preserving this universal contact that opens the boundaries between cultures, between human and religious differences, hence it is a continuous journey that leads subsequently to a new summit, to a new World Youth Day. It seems to me, in this sense, that the World Youth Day should be seen as a sign, as part of a great journey; it creates friendships, opens frontiers and makes visible the beauty of our being with God and of God's being with us. In this regard, let us continue to implement Bl. Pope John Paul II's important idea.

Fr Federico Lombardi, SJ: *Your Holiness, times are changing. Europe and the Western world in general are going through a profound economic crisis which is also showing dimensions of serious social and moral hardship and great uncertainty for the future which is becoming particularly acute for young people. In the past few days we have seen, for example, what happened in Great Britain when rebellion and aggressiveness were unleashed. At the same time there are signs of generous and enthusiastic commitment, of voluntary service and of solidarity, of young believers and non-believers alike. In Madrid we shall meet a large number of marvellous young people. What message of hope can the Church provide to encourage youth throughout the world, especially those who feel discouraged today and are tempted to rebel?*

The Holy Father: It is this. In the current economic crisis what formerly appeared in the previous great crisis has been confirmed: namely, that the ethical dimension is not alien to economic problems but an internal and fundamental dimension of them. The economy does not function with a self-regulation of the market alone, but it needs an ethical reason if it is to function for man. And once again Pope John II's words in his first social Encyclical become apparent: man must be the centre of the economy and the economy cannot be measured according to the maxim of profit but rather according to the common good of all, that it implies responsibility for others and only really functions well if it functions humanly, with respect for others. And with the different dimensions: responsibility for one's own nation and not only for oneself; responsibility for the world — even a nation is not isolated, even Europe is not isolated but is responsible for the whole of humanity and must always think about economic problems in this key of responsibility for the other parts of the world too, for all who suffer, who thirst and hunger, who have no future. And so — a third dimension of this responsibility — is responsibility for the future.

We know we must protect our planet but, all things considered, we must protect a functional service of employment for everyone and realize that tomorrow is also today. If today's young people have no prospects in life then our own life today is misguided and "wrong". Therefore the Church, with her social doctrine, with her doctrine on responsibility to God, proposes the readiness

to give up the maxim of profit and to see things in the humanistic and religious dimension: in other words existing for each other. Thus new ways can also be found. The throngs of volunteers who are working in various parts of the world, not for themselves but for others, and who thereby find the meaning of life, show that it is possible to do this and that an education in these great goals, such as the Church tries to provide, is fundamental for our future.

Fr Federico Lombardi, SJ: *Youth today generally live in multicultural and multidenominational milieus. Reciprocal tolerance is more necessary than ever. You stress the importance of truth. Do you not think that this insistence on truth and on the one Truth which is Christ is a problem for the young today? Don't you think that this insistence might lead to opposition and to difficulty in dialogue and in seeking together with others?*

The Holy Father: The connection between truth and intolerance, monotheism and the incapacity for dialogue with others is a subject that recurs frequently in the discussion on Christianity today. And, of course, it is true that in history there have been instances of abuse, both of the concept of truth and of the concept of monotheism; but there has been abuse. The reality is totally different. The hypothesis is erroneous because truth is only accessible in freedom. It is possible to impose forms of conduct, observance or activity with violence, but not truth!

Truth is only open to freedom, to free consent, and therefore freedom and truth are closely tied, the one is a condition for the other. Besides, there is no alternative to seeking the truth, the true values that give life and a future: we do not want falsehood, we do not want the positivism of norms imposed with a certain force; true values alone lead to the future; and let us say that it is therefore necessary to seek true values and not to permit the arbitrariness of the few, not to let a positivist reason be established which tells us, concerning ethical problems, the great problems of humanity: that there is no rational truth. This would really be exposing man to the will of those in power. We must always be in search of the truth, of true values; we have a nucleus in the fundamental values, in human rights; other similar fundamental elements are recognized and precisely these put us in dialogue with one another. The truth as such is dialogical because it seeks to know better, to understand better and does so in dialogue with others. Thus, seeking the truth and the dignity of the human being is the greatest guarantee of freedom.

Fr Federico Lombardi, SJ: *The World Youth Days are a beautiful interlude and give rise to great enthusiasm, but the young people then go home and find a world in which religious practice is rapidly diminishing. Many of them will probably not be seen again in church. How can the fruits of the World Youth Days be ensured in the future? Do you think the Days effectively produce fruits that last longer than the momentary bursts of enthusiasm?*

The Holy Father: God always sows in silence. The results are not immediately apparent in the statistics. And the seed the Lord scatters on the ground with the World Youth Days is like the seed of which he speaks in the Gospel: some seeds fell along the path and were lost; some fell on

rocky ground and were lost, some fell upon thorns and were lost; but other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth abundant fruit.

It is exactly like this with the sowing of the WYDs: a great deal is lost — and this is human. To borrow other words from the Lord: the mustard seed was small, but it grew and became a great tree. And with yet other words: of course, a great deal is lost, we cannot say straight away that there will be an immense growth of the Church tomorrow. God does not act in this way. However, the Church grows in silence and vigorously. I know from other World Youth Days that a great many friendships were born, friendships for life; a great many experiences that God exists. And let us place trust in this silent growth, and we may be certain, even if the statistics do not tell us much, that the Lord's seed really grows and will be for very many people the beginning of a friendship with God and with others, of a universality of thought, of a common responsibility which really shows us that these days do bear fruit. Many thanks!