



The Holy See

PASTORAL VISIT TO ANCONA

MEETING WITH YOUNG COUPLES

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

Piazza del Plebiscito, Ancona

Sunday, 11 September 2011

[[Video](#)]

Dear Engaged Couples,

I am pleased to end this intense day, the culmination of the National Eucharistic Congress by meeting you, almost as if I wanted to entrust to your young lives the legacy of this event of grace. Moreover, the Eucharist, Christ's gift for the salvation of the world, indicates and contains the truest horizon of the experience you are living: Christ's love as the fulfilment of human love. I thank Archbishop Edoardo Menichelli of Ancona-Osimo for his cordial and profound greeting and all of you for this lively participation; I also thank you for the questions you have put to me and which I welcome, trusting in the presence among us of the Lord Jesus. He alone has the words of eternal life, words of life for you and for your future!

The questions you are asking acquire even greater importance in the present social context. I would like to offer you just a few guidelines by way of an answer. In certain ways our times are far from easy, especially for you, the young. The table is laden with so many delectable things, but it seems, as in the Gospel episode of the wedding at Cana, that the wine of the celebration has run out. Above all the difficulty of finding a steady job veils the future with uncertainty. This condition contributes to postponing definitive decisions and has a negative influence on the growth of society, which fails to fully appreciate the wealth of energy, competence and creativity of your generation.

A culture that tends to ignore clear moral criteria also lacks the festive wine: in the confusion everyone is urged to act in an individual, autonomous manner, often solely on the perimeter of the present. The fragmentation of the community fabric is reflected in a relativism that corrodes essential values; the harmony of feelings, of spiritual states and emotions seems more important than sharing a plan for life. Even basic decisions then become fragile, exposed as they are to the possibility of revocation that is often considered an expression of freedom, whereas in fact it points to the lack of it. The exaltation of the body, which in reality banalizes sexuality and tends to make it live outside the communal context of life and love, also belongs to this culture which also lacks the wine of the feast.

Dear young people, do not fear to face these challenges! Never lose hope. Be brave, even in difficulties, remaining steadfast in your faith. You may be certain that in every circumstance you are cherished and protected by the love of God, who is our strength. God is good. For this reason it is important that the encounter with God, especially in personal and community prayer, should be constant and faithful, as is the development of your love: loving God and feeling that he loves me. Nothing can separate us from God's love!

Rest assured, therefore, that the Church too is close to you, supports you and never ceases to look at you with great trust. She knows that you are thirsting for values, true values on which it is worthwhile to build your home! They are the values of faith, of the person, of the family, of human relations and of justice.

Do not lose heart in the face of these shortages that seem to extinguish the joy on the table of life. When there was no more wine at the wedding in Cana Mary told the servants to turn to Jesus and gave them a precise order: "Do whatever he tells you" (Jn 2:5). Treasure these words, the last to be spoken by Mary as recorded in the Gospels, as it were, a spiritual testament of hers, and you will always have the joy of the celebration: Jesus is the wine of the feast!

As engaged couples, you find yourselves living a unique season that opens you to the wonder of the encounter and enables you to discover the beauty of existence and of being precious to someone, of being able to say to each other: you are important to me. Live this journey intensely, gradually and truthfully. Do not give up following a high ideal of love, a reflection and testimony of God's love! But how should you live this stage of your life and bear witness to love in the community? I would like to tell you first of all to avoid shutting yourselves into intimist, falsely reassuring relationships; rather, endeavour to make your relationship become a leaven of active and responsible presence in the community.

Then do not forget that if it is to be genuine, love too requires a process of maturation: from the initial attraction and from that "feeling good" with the other, learn to "love" the other and "to want the best" for the other. Love lives by giving freely, by self-sacrifice, by forgiveness and by respect for the other.

Dear friends, all human love is a sign of the eternal Love that created us and whose grace sanctifies the decision made by a man and a woman to give each other reciprocal life in marriage. Live the period of your engagement in the trusting expectation of this gift, which should be received while following a path of knowledge, respect and care, which you should never lose: only on this condition will the language of love remain significant, despite the passage of time. Consequently educate yourselves from this moment in the freedom of fidelity that leads you to look after each other, to the point of living for each other.

Prepare yourselves to choose with conviction the “for ever” which connotes love; indissolubility, before being a condition, is a gift to be desired, asked for and lived out, over and above any other changeable human situation. And do not imagine, in accordance with a widespread idea, that coexistence is a guarantee for the future.

Precipitating matters ends by “missing out” on love, which instead needs to respect timing and to be gradual in its expression; it needs to make room for Christ, who can make human love faithful, happy and indissoluble. The fidelity and continuity of your love for each other will also enable you to be open to life, to be parents: the permanence of your union in the sacrament of Matrimony will allow the children God bestows upon you to grow up trusting in the goodness of life. Fidelity, indissolubility and the transmission of life are the pillars of every family, the true common good, a precious patrimony of society as a whole. From now on found your journey towards marriage on these pillars and witness to this among your peers, too: such a service is precious! Be grateful to those who guide you in your formation with commitment, competence and availability: they are a sign of the Christian community’s attention and care for you. You are not alone: be the first to seek and welcome the Church's company!

I would like to go back over an essential point: the experience of love contains the quest for God. True love promises the Infinite! Therefore make this period of your preparation for marriage an itinerary of faith: rediscover for your life as a couple the centrality of Jesus Christ and of walking with the Church.

Mary teaches us that the good of each one depends on listening with docility to her Son’s words. In those who trust in him, the water of everyday life is changed into the wine of love that makes life good, beautiful and fruitful. Indeed, Cana is the announcement and anticipation of the gift of the new wine of the Eucharist, the sacrifice and banquet in which the Lord comes to us and renews and transforms us. And do not underestimate the vital importance of this meeting: may the Sunday liturgical assembly find you fully participating: the Christian meaning of existence and a new way of life flows from the Eucharist (cf. Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis*, nn. 72-73).

You will then have no fear in assuming the demanding responsibility of deciding to marry; you will not fear to enter into this “great mystery” in which “two shall become one” (cf. Eph 5:31-32).

Dear young people, I entrust you to the protection of St Joseph and Mary Most Holy; by following the Virgin Mother's invitation – "Do whatever he tells you" – you will certainly enjoy the real feast and will know how to offer the best "wine", the wine Christ gives for the Church and for the world. I would like to say that I too am close to you and to all those who, like you, are living this marvellous journey of love. I bless you with all my heart!

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