

WYD: Welcome celebration at the Plaza de Cibeles

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Dear Young Friends,

It is a great joy for me to meet you here in the heart of this lovely city of Madrid, whose keys the Lord Mayor has kindly presented me. Today Madrid is also the capital of the world's young people, and the gaze of the whole Church is fixed here. The Lord has brought us together here so that during these days we can experience the beauty of World Youth Day. Through your presence and your participation in these celebrations, the name of Christ will echo throughout this great City. Let us pray that his message of hope and love will also resound in the hearts of those who are not believers or who have grown distant from the Church. Many thanks for the splendid welcome which you gave me as I entered the City, as a sign of your love and closeness to the Successor of Peter.

I greet Cardinal Stanisław Ryżko, President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, and his staff in that Council, with gratitude for all the work which they have done. I also thank Cardinal Antonio María Rouco Varela, the Archbishop of Madrid, for his kind words and for the efforts made by his Archdiocese, along with the other Dioceses of Spain, in preparing this World Youth Day; my thanks also go to all those in so many other Particular Churches throughout the world who have generously contributed to its preparation. I express appreciation to the national, the autonomous regional and the local authorities for their presence and for their generous help in ensuring the good organization of this great event. My thanks go also to my brother Bishops, the priests and seminarians, the consecrated men and women and all the faithful present here today, who have helped to prepare the young people to experience these intense days of pilgrimage towards an encounter with Christ. I offer all of you a heartfelt greeting in the Lord and I repeat that it is a great blessing for me to be here with you. May the flame of Christ's love burn always bright in your hearts.

[French] Dear young French-speaking people, you have responded in great numbers to the Lord's call to come and meet him in Madrid. I congratulate you for this! Welcome to World Youth Day! You have brought with you profound questions, and you are seeking answers. It is always a good thing to keep seeking. Above all, seek the Truth, which is not an idea or an ideology or a slogan, but a person: Christ, God himself, who has come into our midst! You rightly wish to plant your faith in him, to ground your life in Christ. He has always loved you and he knows you better than anyone else. May these days so rich in prayer, teaching and encounters help you to rediscover this, so that you may love him all the more. May Christ accompany you during this special time when, all together, we shall sing his praises and offer him our prayers!

[English] I extend an affectionate greeting to the many English-speaking young people who have come to Madrid. May these days of prayer, friendship and celebration bring us closer to each other and to the Lord Jesus. Make trust in Christ's word the foundation of your lives! Planted and built up in him, firm in the faith and open to the power of the Spirit, you will find your place in God's plan and enrich the Church with your gifts. Let us pray for one another, so that we may be joyful witnesses to Christ, today and always. God bless you all!

[German] Dear German-speaking friends! I greet all of you with great affection. I am happy that you have come in such great numbers. During these days we want together to confess our faith in Jesus Christ, to deepen that faith and to pass it on. Let us realize ever anew that Jesus is the one who gives true meaning to our lives. Let us open our hearts to Christ. May he grant all of us a joyful and blessed time here in Madrid.

[Italian] Dear young Italians! I greet you with great affection and I am delighted that so many of you have come here, filled with the joy of faith. Experience these days in a spirit of intense prayer and fraternity, and testify to the vitality of the Church in Italy, its parishes, associations and movements. Share this wealth with everyone. Thank you!

[Portuguese] Dear young people of the different countries whose official language is Portuguese, and all those who accompany you, welcome to Madrid! I greet all of you with friendship and affection and I invite you to draw close to the eternal source of your youth and to know the absolute protagonist of this World Youth Day and - I hope - of your own lives: Christ the Lord. In these days you will personally hear his word resound. Let this word into your hearts, let it take root, and make it the foundation of your lives. Firm in the faith, you will be a link in the great chain of believers. No one can believe without being supported by the faith of others, and by my faith I also help to support others in the faith. The Church needs you, and you need the Church.

[Polish] I greet the young people who have come from Poland, countrymen of Blessed John Paul II, the founder of World Youth Day. I am delighted by your presence here in Madrid! I pray that these will be good days, days of prayer, in which you will strengthen your relationship with Jesus. May God's Spirit guide you.

Pope Benedict XVI