

## A new way of being Christian



Benedict XVI to the College of Cardinals, to the Roman Curia and to the Governorate

From Africa and from the World Youth Day in Madrid, a powerful remedy against faith fatigue and weariness

The joyous experiences of faith lived in Madrid with the youth of the world, then the recent Visit to Benin were moments of “great encouragement” for the Pope, showing him that it is possible to give life to “a new, more youthful form of Christianity” able to overcome the “faith fatigue” ever more present in Europe.

With this persuasion, Benedict XVI addressed the members of the College of Cardinals, the Roman Curia and the Governorate at the traditional Christmas Audience which took place Thursday morning, 22 December in the Clementine Hall. A meeting that, as is custom, was an occasion to retrace the year, marked in a dramatic way, especially in Europe, by the financial and economic crisis. The foundations, the Pontiff explained, are to be found ultimately in the “ethical crisis looming over the Old Continent” and risks pushing individuals and social groups to “practise renunciation and make sacrifices” and remaining entrenched in the defense of mere “personal interests”.

The Pope also spoke of the crisis regarding the situation of Christianity in Europe, reiterating what he previously stated during his Visit to Germany in September: “The essence of the crisis of the Church in Europe is the crisis of faith”. Benedict XVI underlined with a concerned tone the progressing decrease and constant ageing of those who regularly go to church. He also spoke of how the “recruitment of priests is stagnating” and how “scepticism and unbelief are growing” among people.

What are we to do in the face of this reality? The Pontiff's answer is “action alone fails to resolve the matter” because “if faith does not take on new life, deep conviction and real strength from the encounter with Jesus Christ, then all other reforms will remain ineffective”.

Thus the Pope explained the experiences during his Visits this year to Madrid and Benin: occasions in which Benedict XVI had the opportunity to touch with his own hands the fruits of that “joy in being Christian” which today is “a powerful remedy “ against the “ faith fatigue” which is affecting Christianity in Europe.

In particular from the World Youth Day on Spanish soil, the Pontiff identified five characterizing aspects of “a new, more youthful form of Christianity”: a “new experience of catholicity, of the Church’s universality”; the ability to give a piece of one's own life not for themselves but for Christ and others; the centrality of adoration as an “act of faith” that shows the “certainty of God’s tangible love for us”; the importance of the sacrament of Confession, sign “we need forgiveness over and over again, and that forgiveness brings responsibility”; the joy of those who know they are accepted and loved unconditionally by God. He observed, where “man’s sense of being accepted and loved by God is lost, then there is no longer any answer to the question whether to be a human being is good at all”.

L'Osservatore Romano