

Pope Benedict XVI recommends "Extraordinary" Youth Catechism

ROME, FEB. 4, 2011 (Zenit.org).- "Dear friends, young people! Today I counsel you to read an extraordinary book."

Thus begins Benedict XVI's preface to "Youcat," the new catechism for young people being prepared



in light of the upcoming World Youth Day.

Ignatius Press is publishing the English version, due out March 1. L'Osservatore Romano published the Holy Father's preface.

The Pope claimed Youcat is extraordinary "because of its content but also because of its format," which he goes on to explain is based on the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

He spoke of the difficult times of the recent past, following the Second Vatican Council, when "many people no longer knew correctly what Christians should actually believe, what the Church taught, [...] and how all this could be adapted to the new cultural climate."

Amid questions about if the Church can even teach, or if Christianity is obsolete, the Pontiff recalled, his predecessor "made an audacious decision: He decided that the bishops worldwide should write a book to answer these questions." "He [John Paul II] entrusted to me the task of coordinating and overseeing the work of the bishops so that a book would be born from the contributions of the bishops, a real book and not a simple juxtaposition of a multiplicity of texts," Benedict XVI recalled. "[...] I was frightened by this task, and I must confess that I doubted that such a thing could succeed. How could it be that authors who are spread around the whole world could produce a legible book?"

The Pope admitted that "still today the fact seems a miracle to me that this project in the end succeeded."

Different worlds

After explaining the general dynamic of the work that went into the Catechism, he noted that already then, "we became ever more aware of how the text required 'translations' into the different worlds, to be able to reach the people with their different mentalities and different problems."

In light of World Youth Days, he continued, "we asked ourselves if we should not seek to translate the Catechism of the Catholic Church into the language of young people and make its words penetrate their world."

Hence, the Holy Father noted, the work was entrusted to the same editor as for the adult version: Cardinal Christoph Schönborn, archbishop of Vienna.

"I hope that many young people will let themselves be fascinated by this book," he said.



Not superficial

The Pontiff continued, "Some persons tell me that the Catechism does not interest today's youth, but I do not believe this affirmation and I am sure I am right."

Young people are not superficial as they are accused of being, the Holy Father affirmed: "Young people want to know what life truly consists of. [...] This book is fascinating because it speaks to us of our very destiny and that is why it concerns each one of us very closely. "Because of this I invite you:

Study the Catechism! This is my heartfelt wish."

He noted that the youth version of the Catechism doesn't underestimate young people.

"[I]t does not," the Pope said, "offer easy solutions; it calls for a new life on your part; it presents to you the message of the Gospel as the 'precious pearl' for which there is need to give everything."

"Because of this I ask you: Study the Catechism with passion and perseverance! Sacrifice your time for it! Study it in the silence of your room, read it together, if you are friends, form groups and study networks, exchange ideas on the Internet. In any case remain in dialogue on your faith," he exhorted. "You must know what you believe; you must know your faith with the same precision with which a specialist in information technology knows the working system of a computer; you must know it as a musician knows his piece; yes, you must be much more profoundly rooted in the faith of the generation of your parents, to be able to resist forcefully and with determination the challenges and temptations of this time.

"You have need of divine help, if you do not want your faith to dry up as a dewdrop in the sun, if you do not want to succumb to the temptations of consumerism, if you do not want your love to be drowned in pornography, if you do not want to betray the weak and the victims of abuse and violence."

Love the Church

The Pope concluded with a final counsel: "You all know in what way the community of believers has been wounded in recent times by the attacks of evil, by the penetration of sin in the interior, in fact in the heart of the Church. Do not take this as a pretext to flee from God's presence; you yourselves are the Body of Christ, the Church! Carry intact the fire of your love in this Church every time that men have obscured her face."

And he noted God's predilection for the young: "When Israel was in the darkest point of its history, God called to the rescue no great and esteemed persons, but a youth called Jeremiah; Jeremiah felt invested with too great a mission: 'Ah, Lord God! Behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth!'

"But God did not let himself be misled: 'Do not say, "I am only a youth;" for to all to whom I send you you shall go, and whatever I command you you shall speak.'" "I bless you," the Holy Father concluded, "and pray every day for all of you."