

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY
OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO SYDNEY (AUSTRALIA) ON THE OCCASION
OF THE 23rd WORLD YOUTH DAY
(JULY 12 - 21, 2008)

***INTERVIEW OF THE HOLY FATHER BENEDICT XVI
DURING THE FLIGHT TO AUSTRALIA***

Saturday, 12 July 2008

Fr Federico Lombardi, S.J., Director of the Holy See Press Office and Vatican Radio, introduced the question-and-answer session.

Lucio Brunelli (Italian Television - RAI): *Your Holiness, this is your second World Youth Day. The first - let us say - that is entirely your own. What are your feelings as you prepare for it and what is the main message that you want to communicate to the young people? Then, do you think that World Youth Days deeply affect the life of the Church that hosts them? And, lastly, do you think that the formula of these youth meetings on a massive scale is still relevant today?*

The Holy Father: I am going to Australia with feelings of great joy. I have the most beautiful memories of the World Youth Day in Cologne; it was not merely a mass event, it was above all a great celebration of faith, a human encounter in communion with Christ. We saw how faith opens borders, how it truly has an ability to unite the different cultures and that it creates joy. And I hope this will be so now in Australia. Therefore, I am delighted to see many young people and to see them united in the desire for God and in the desire for a truly human world. The essential message is suggested by the words that constitute the slogan of this World Youth Day: we are speaking of the Holy Spirit who makes us Christ's witnesses. I would thus like to focus my message precisely on this reality of the Holy Spirit who appears in different dimensions: he is the Spirit who was active in the Creation. The dimension of the Creation is very present because he is the Creator Spirit. It seems to me an important subject at the present moment. However, the Spirit is also the inspirer of Scripture: on our journey, in the light of Scripture we can move on together with the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit is Christ's Spirit, hence, he guides us in communion with Christ and reveals himself, St Paul says, ultimately in charisms, that is, in a great number of unexpected gifts that change the different epochs and give the Church fresh strength. These dimensions, therefore, invite us to see the traces of the Spirit and to make the Spirit visible to others, too. A World Youth Day is not merely a passing event: it is prepared for in advance by a long journey with the Cross and the Icon of Our Lady, which in turn is not only prepared for from the organizational but also from the spiritual viewpoint. Consequently, these days are the culmination of a long previous process. Everything is the fruit of a journey, of being together on a journey leading to

Christ. Moreover, the World Youth Day creates a history, that is, friendships are formed, new inspirations are born: thus the World Youth Day continues. I think this is very important: not only to see these three or four days, but to see the entire journey that precedes them, as well as the subsequent journey. In this sense, it seems to me that World Youth Day - at least for us in the near future - is a valid formula which prepares us to understand that in different perspectives and from different parts of the earth we are moving on towards Christ and towards communion. This is how we learn a new way of journeying on together. In this sense, I hope that it will also be a formula for the future.

Mr Paul John Kelly (The Australian Newspaper): Holy Father, I would like to ask my question in English: Australia is a very secular land, with low religious practice and much religious indifference. I'd like to ask whether you are optimistic about the future of the Church in Australia, or are worried and alarmed that the Australian Church may follow the European path to decline? What message would you offer Australia to overcome its religious indifference?

The Holy Father: I will do my best in English, but I beg your pardon for my insufficiencies in English. I think Australia in its present historical configuration is a part of the "Western world", economically and politically, and so it is clear that Australia shares also the successes and the problems of the Western world. The Western world has had in the last 50 years great successes - economic successes, technical successes; yet religion - Christian faith - is in a certain sense in crisis. This is clear because there is the impression that we do not need God, we can do all on our own, that we do not need God to be happy, we do not need God to create a better world, that God is not necessary, we can do all by ourselves. On the other hand we see that religion is always present in the world and will always be present because God is present in the heart of the human being and can never disappear. We see how religion is really a force in this world and in countries. I would not simply speak about a decline of religion in Europe: certainly there is a crisis in Europe, not so much in America but nevertheless there too, and in Australia. But on the other hand, there is always a presence of the faith in new forms, and in new ways; in the minority, perhaps, but always present for all the society to see. And now in this historical moment, we begin to see that we do need God. We can do so many things, but we cannot create our climate. We thought we could do it, but we cannot do it. We need the gift of the Earth, the gift of water, we need the Creator; the Creator reappears in his creation. And so we also come to understand that we cannot be really happy, cannot be really promoting justice for all the world, without a criterion at work in our own ideas, without a God who is just, and gives us the light, and gives us life. So, I think there will be in a certain sense in this "Western world" a crisis of our faith, but we will always also have a revival of the faith, because Christian faith is simply true, and the truth will always be present in the human world, and God will always be truth. In this sense, I am in the end optimistic.

Mr Auskar Surbakti of SBS, the Australian television: Holy Father, I am sorry but I do not speak Italian well so I will be asking my question in English. There has been a call from Australian victims of sexual abuse by clergy for Your Holiness to address the issue and to offer an apology to the victims during your Visit to Australia. Cardinal Pell

himself has said that it would be appropriate for the Pope to address the issue, and you, yourself made a similar gesture on your recent trip to the United States. Will Your Holiness be speaking on the issue of sexual abuse and will you be offering an apology?

The Holy Father: Yes, the problem is essentially the same as in the United States. I felt obliged to speak about it in the United States because it is essential for the Church to reconcile, to prevent, to help and also to see guilt in these problems, so I will essentially say the same things as I said in America. As I said we have three dimensions to clarify: the first I mention is our moral teaching. It must be clear, it was always clear from the first centuries that priesthood, to be a priest, is incompatible with this behaviour, because the priest is in the service of Our Lord, and Our Lord is holiness in person, and always teaching us - the Church has always insisted on this. We have to reflect on what was insufficient in our education, in our teaching in recent decades: there was, in the 50s, 60s and 70s, the idea of proportionalism in ethics: it held that no thing is bad in itself, but only in proportion to others; with proportionalism it was possible to think for some subjects - one could also be paedophilia - that in some proportion they could be a good thing. Now, it must be stated clearly, this was never Catholic doctrine. There are things which are always bad, and paedophilia is always bad. In our education, in the seminaries, in our permanent formation of the priests, we have to help priests to really be close to Christ, to learn from Christ, and so to be helpers, and not adversaries of our fellow human beings, of our Christians. So, we will do everything possible to clarify what is the teaching of the Church and help in the education and in the preparation of priests, in permanent formation, and we will do all possible to heal and to reconcile the victims. I think this is the essential content of what the word "apologize" says. I think it is better, more important to give the content of the formula, and I think the content has to say what was insufficient in our behaviour, what we must do in this moment, how we can prevent and how we all can heal and reconcile.

Mrs Martine Nouaille, of "Agence France Presse": *One of the topics of the recent G8 meeting in Japan was the battle against climate change. Australia is a Country that is very sensitive to this topic because of the severe drought and dramatic climactic events in this region of the world. Do you think that the decisions taken in this context are equal to the challenge? Will you be speaking on this subject during your Visit?*

The Holy Father: As I already said in my first answer, this problem will certainly be present at this World Youth Day since we are speaking of the Holy Spirit and consequently of the Creation and of our responsibilities with regard to Creation. I do not claim to enter into the technicalities that politicians and experts must resolve but rather to provide an essential impetus, to make the responsibilities visible so that we may respond to this great challenge: to rediscover the Face of the Creator in Creation, to rediscover in the Creator's presence our responsibilities for his Creation, which he has entrusted to us, to form the ethical capacity for a lifestyle that we must adopt if we wish to tackle the problems of this situation and if we really want to reach positive solutions. Therefore, I would like to awaken awareness and to make people see the broad context of this problem to which fitting answers, which do not depend on us, will be applied by political policies and experts.

Cindy Wooden of CNS, Catholic News Service: *While you are in Australia, the Bishops of the Anglican Communion which is also very widespread in Australia, will be meeting at the Lambeth Conference. One of the main topics will be possible ways of strengthening communion between the provinces and of finding a way to ensure that one or more provinces do not take initiatives that the others see as contrary to the Gospel or to Tradition. There is a risk of the fragmentation of the Anglican Communion and the possibility that some may ask to be received into the Catholic Church. What are your hopes for the Lambeth Conference and for the Archbishop of Canterbury?*

The Holy Father: My essential contribution can only be prayer and with my prayers I shall be very close to the Anglican Bishops meeting at the Lambeth Conference. We cannot and must not intervene immediately in their discussions, we respect their responsibilities and what we desire is that new divisions or ruptures may be avoided and a responsible solution found in keeping with our time and also with fidelity to the Gospel. These two things must go hand in hand. Christianity is always contemporary and lives in this world, in a certain period, but it makes Jesus Christ's message present in this period and therefore makes a true contribution to this time only by being faithful in a way that is mature and creative but faithful to Christ's message. Let us hope, and I am personally praying, that together they may find the path of the Gospel in our day. This is my hope for the Archbishop of Canterbury: that the Anglican Communion in communion with the Gospel of Christ and of the Word of the Lord may find responses to the current challenges.

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