



## **Christianity Isn't Just "Dos and Don'ts," Says Pope In Interview Looking Ahead to Youth Day**

CASTEL GANDOLFO, Italy, AUG. 16, 2005 (Zenit.org).- Benedict XVI wants to show the young people attending World Youth Day that Christianity is not a burdensome set of rules, but rather a personal experience of God's love.

The Pope expressed this in the first media interview of his pontificate, granted to Father Eberhard von Gemmingen, director of Vatican Radio's German program, on the eve of his first international trip to meet with hundreds of thousands of young people in Cologne.

"I would like to show them how beautiful it is to be Christian, because the widespread idea which continues to exist is that Christianity is composed of laws and bans which one has to keep and, hence, is something toilsome and burdensome -- that one is freer without such a burden," said the Holy Father.

During the interview, broadcast Monday on Vatican Radio, the Bishop of Rome explained that he wanted to make it clear that "it is not a burden to be carried by a great love and realization, but it is like having wings."

"It is wonderful to be a Christian with this knowledge that gives us a great breadth, a large community," he said. "As Christians we are never alone -- in the sense that God is always with us, but also in the sense that we are always standing together in a large community, a community for The Way, that we have a project for the future."

Benedict XVI hopes that, in proclaiming the Gospel, young people will be captivated and say: "This is the answer we have been waiting for."

More to life

"It is evident that many heavy burdens exist in our modern Western society, driving us away from Christianity. Faith and God appear to be far away," acknowledged the Holy Father.

However, he is convinced that "among young people the sentiment is spreading" that there "must be something more" to life than all these diversions, the leisure industry, buying and selling, where religion is degraded by being turned into a product in the "market of religions."

Young people want to know what the "essential" question is, the Pope said.

Therefore, Benedict XVI said, Christianity must not be considered "as something out of date" or "exhausted," but "as a possibility, because it came from God himself and is hence always a fresh possibility" which "brings about new dimensions."

"This should be the event of the encounter between the proclamation of the Gospel and young people," he concluded.

During the interview, the Pontiff also addressed issues such as ecumenism and the growth of secularism in Europe.