



Pope Looks for "Springtime of Hope" After Cologne Evaluates His Visit to Germany

VATICAN CITY, AUG. 24, 2005 (Zenit.org).- Benedict XVI hopes that the 1 million participants who gathered in Cologne for World Youth Day will become heralds of a "new springtime" for the world.

The Pope dedicated today's general audience in Paul VI Hall to evaluate his first foreign apostolic trip to his native Germany to attend World Youth Day.

May "the young people of Cologne bear with them the light of Christ, who is truth and love, and spread it everywhere," said the Holy Father, who arrived in Rome by helicopter from nearby Castel Gandolfo where he is spending the summer.

"In this way we will be able to witness a springtime of hope in Germany, Europe and the whole world," Benedict XVI said.

In his address, the Pope recalled the images of Cologne which are imprinted in his heart: his first meeting with young people, as he sailed on the Rhine River, and the event's culminating moments: the vigil last Saturday night in Marienfeld and the closing Mass on Sunday morning.

Travel companion

Recalling that the theme of World Youth Day focused on the Magi's words, "We Have Come to Worship Him," the Pope explained that those mysterious characters from the East -- whose relics, according to tradition, are in Cologne -- "were the guides of those young pilgrims to Christ."

"How significant it is that all this took place as we prepare for the conclusion of the Eucharistic Year called by John Paul II!" he exclaimed.

Benedict XVI continued: "In Cologne young people met and worshipped the Emmanuel, the God-with-us, in the mystery of the Eucharist and understood better that the Church is the great family through which God creates a space of communion and unity among all continents, cultures and races.

"Jesus makes himself our travel companion in the Eucharist, and, in the Eucharist ... effects a 'nuclear fission' in the depths of our being."

"Only this profound explosion of goodness that overcomes evil can give life to the other transformations necessary to change the world," the Pope said summarizing the message he left with the young people in Cologne.

A "symphony"

The Holy Father also recalled other thrilling moments of his trip, such as his meeting with representatives of other Churches and ecclesial communities.

"I hope that the dialogue, as a reciprocal exchange of gifts and not just of words, will contribute to make that ordered and harmonious symphony grow, which is Catholic unity," he said.

Benedict XVI also relived "with emotion" his visit to the Synagogue of Cologne, in which Germany's oldest Jewish community has its headquarters, where he recalled "the Shoah [Holocaust] and the 60th anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps."

In addition, the Pontiff mentioned his meeting with representatives of Muslim communities in Germany.

To them he said he expressed "the hopes and concerns of the difficult historical moment that we are going through, hoping that fanaticism and violence will be extirpated and that we will be able to collaborate together in always defending the dignity of the human person and in protecting his fundamental rights."

The Holy Father added: "From the heart of 'old' Europe, which in the past century, unfortunately, knew horrendous conflicts and inhuman regimes, young people relaunched to the humanity of our time the message of hope that does not disappoint, because it is founded on the Word of God made flesh in Jesus Christ, dead and risen for our salvation."