Pope says choose Christ, not money and sensual pleasures
CBCNews, Fri, 26 Jul 2002 14:17:21

TORONTO - Pope John Paul II told a huge crowd of youthful pilgrims that they will be tempted by money and sensual pleasures, but real happiness lies in God.

People have a choice, between hatred and sin on one side, and light and peace on the other, he said in the opening address of World Youth Day.

Jesus asked people to choose 2,000 years ago, and "he makes the same invitation today," the Pope said to a cheering, colourful throng estimated at more than 300,000.

The temptations today may be money, or "the superficial and fleeting pleasures of the senses," he said.

But Jesus is the right choice, and that "means rejecting the lure of sin, no matter how attractive it may be," the Pope said.

"He's counting on you. Never forget."

While the speech was based on a well-known Christian theme, the pilgrims reacted with enthusiasm and delight. "It's made me realize that you're not alone," a young woman said.

The speech left a priest with the message that "the church is still alive."

Cheers and chants, especially "JP2, we love you," burst out whenever a gap opened in the Pope's halting speech. He looked both frail and inspired by the enthusiasm of the pilgrims.

Young at heart

He was aware of his own age, saying the Pope is "full of years but still young at heart."

Before his speech, the 82-year-old pontiff, sitting on a high-backed white chair and leaning over his notes, greeted young people from all over the world in a variety of languages, including English, French, Portuguese and Italian.

He speaks eight languages, and used phrases from a dozen when he welcomed the pilgrims and said goodbye after his speech.

But it didn't matter what he language he spoke; the cheering was almost continuous, and frequently there were long breaks of chanting and rhythmic clapping.
"I have been really looking forward to this meeting," said "the Pope who loves you dearly."

"We Love the Pope"

He complimented the crowd, saying "this great youth pilgrimage is eager to hold the whole world in a close embrace of faith and hope."

Many of the pilgrims were overcome with emotion, tears streaming down their cheeks.

The Pope arrived by helicopter and then slowly followed a twisting course through the crowd in his Popemobile to the stage.

Flags from many nations

Once there, the names of all the countries represented were called by continent and representatives of each one approached the stage carrying their national flag, bowed to the Pope, and moved off.

The flag carriers wore everything from traditional national dress to shorts and T-shirts.

Some pilgrims had arrived just after dawn. Several said their dedication to Catholicism had been heightened by the Pope's determination to attend World Youth Day, despite his failing health.

During his hour on the stage, the Pope looked tired and drawn on occasion, but then was clearly pleased and happy.