

*COLOGNE, Germany, AUG. 21, 2005: The address Benedict XVI delivered at the end of the closing Mass of World Youth Day, before praying the Angelus.*

Dear Friends,

We have come to the conclusion of this marvelous celebration and indeed of the 20th World Youth Day. In my heart I sense welling up within me a single thought: "Thank you!" I am sure that this thought finds an echo in each one of you. God himself has implanted it in our hearts and he has sealed it with this Eucharist, which literally means "thanksgiving." Yes, dear young people, our gratitude, born from faith, is expressed in our song of praise to Him, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who has given us yet another sign of his immense love.

Our words of thanks rise up to God through the gift of this unforgettable meeting, and are now extended to all those who have been involved in its preparation and organization. I wish to renew my gratitude particularly to the Pontifical Council for the Laity, under its president, Archbishop Stanislaw Rylko, ably assisted by the secretary, Bishop Josef Clemens, and also to my confreres from the German Bishops' Conference, in the first place to the archbishop of Cologne, Cardinal Joachim Meisner. I am grateful to the political and administrative authorities who have ensured that each event has run smoothly; I thank the many volunteers from German dioceses and from different countries. A cordial word of thanks goes also to the many contemplative communities who have supported us in prayer during this World Youth Day.

And now, as the living presence of the Risen Christ in our midst nourishes our faith and hope, I am pleased to announce that the next World Youth Day will take place in Sydney, Australia, in 2008. We entrust to the maternal guidance of Mary most holy, the future course of the young people of the whole world.

*[After praying the Angelus, the Holy Father said:]*

[In French] I greet affectionately the French-speaking young people. Thank you dear friends, for your participation, and I trust that you return home bringing within, you like the Magi, the joy of having found Christ, the Son of the living God.

[In English] I extend a warm greeting to the English-speaking young people from all parts of the world at the conclusion of these unforgettable days. May the light of Christ, which you have followed on your way to Cologne, shine ever more brightly and strongly in your lives!

[In Spanish] Dear Spanish-speaking young people! You have come to worship Christ. Now that you have found him, continue to worship him in your hearts, always prepared to make a defense to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you (cf. 1 Peter 3:15). Have a pleasant return home!

[In Italian] My dear Italian-speaking friends! This 20th World Youth Day is ending, but the Eucharistic celebration must continue in our lives: Bring to all the joy of Christ that you have found here.

[In Polish] To all the young Polish people, I extend a warm embrace! As the great Pope John Paul II would say: Keep the flame of faith alive in your lives and in your people. May Our Lady, Mother of Christ, guide your steps always.

[In Portuguese] I greet with affection the Portuguese-speaking young people. I pray, dear friends, that you will always live in friendship with Jesus, so as to know true joy and communicate it to others, especially to young people in difficulty.

[In Tagalog] My dear Tagalog-speaking friends and all the young people of Asia! Like the Magi, you too have come from the East to worship Christ.

Now that you have found him, return to your countries bringing in your hearts the light of his love.

[In Swahili] A warm greeting also to you, young people from Africa! Bring to your great and beloved Continent the hope that Christ has given you.

Be everywhere sowers of peace and brotherhood.

[In German] Dear friends who understand me in my own language, I thank you for the affection with which you have sustained me in these days. Be close to me in prayer. Walk together in unity. Always be faithful to Christ and to the Church. May the peace and the joy of Christ be with you always!