

YOUNG PEOPLE: CULTIVATE SPIRITUAL LIFE AND FORMATION

VATICAN CITY, 18 MAY 2008 - Following his visit to Genoa's "Giannina Gaslini" the Pope met with a group of young people.

"You are the youth of Genoa!" he exclaimed in opening his address. "Youth", he told his audience, "real youth, is not a question of years and physical vigour. ... There are, unfortunately, people young in years but old within. ... Being young means having discovered the things that do not pass with the swift passage of the years. If young people discover the real and great values, they never grow old, despite the fact that the body follows its own laws".

"Only people who are good and generous are truly young", he said. "I hope you will remain young; not fashionable, for fashions disappear in the winking of an eye, hurtling by in a frenetic career. Youth, on the other hand, the youth of goodness, remains forever. Indeed, it will be perfect and resplendent in heaven with God".

"Youth still has all its future ahead. ... The future is full of promise. Today however, for many, it is also full of threats, especially the threat of a great void. Hence many people want to hold back time for fear of a future in emptiness". Faced with such a situation, "it is important to choose real promises that open to the future, even by making sacrifices. ... And the first fundamental choice must be God".

The Holy Father invited the young people "to cultivate spiritual life. ... The life of the soul", he explained, "is meeting with Him, the real Face of God, it is silent and persistent prayer, it is sacramental life, it is meditating upon the Gospel, it is spiritual accompaniment, it is cordial membership of the Church and of your ecclesial communities.

"Yet how", he added, "can one love what one does not know? ... Hence the need to delve more deeply into the mystery of Jesus, the truth of His thought that resounds in the Gospel and in the Church's Magisterium. Without a solid formation", he went on, "how will it be possible to explain the faith to your peers, so full of questions about life, about themselves, about Christian faith, and the Church?"

The Holy Father encouraged the young people to announce the Gospel "in the various areas of life, in your parishes, in the most difficult neighbourhoods, in the streets. Announce Christ the Lord, hope of the world. The more man distances himself from God (Who is his Source) the more he loses himself; human coexistence becomes difficult and society crumbles. Remain united to one another, help one another to live and grow in faith and Christian life, in order to become intrepid witness of the Lord".

"If you remain united to Christ and the Church, you can achieve great things. This is the hope I consign to you" he concluded. "Goodbye until we meet again in Sydney!"