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### **Church in the World**

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*Robert Mickens - 27 August 2011*

Pope Benedict XVI has concluded World Youth Day (WYD) in Spain's capital by encouraging more than 1.5 million youngsters to be uncompromising witnesses of their Catholic faith to a world marked by secularism and relativism. "I ask you to spread throughout the world the profound and joyful experience of faith you have had here in this noble country," the Pope said in a farewell speech on Sunday at the Madrid-Barajas international airport. "Help your friends discover that loving Christ means living life to the full," he said after a four-day visit that began on 18 August. He said the time in Spain had been filled with enthusiasm and grace, and announced his intention to be in Rio de Janeiro in 2013 for the next World Youth Day.

The theme of the week-long WYD gathering was, "Planted and built up in Jesus Christ, firm in the faith" (Colossians 2:7).

"Let me also remind you that following Jesus in faith means walking at his side in the communion of the Church," Pope Benedict said at the final WYD Mass on Sunday morning on Cuatro Vientos military airfield. "We cannot follow Jesus on our own," he insisted, and warned that those tempted to do so would end up following a "counterfeit" Jesus.

Being a Catholic, he said, necessarily meant involvement in a parish, religious community or ecclesial movement, as well as "celebration of Sunday Mass, frequent reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the cultivation of personal prayer and meditation on God's Word". In a WYD first, the Pope also heard the confessions of four young persons.

He delivered addresses and homilies at 12 different events, most of them outdoors in extreme heat. He also held private visits with Spain's royal family, its outgoing Socialist Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, and the country's conservative opposition leader, Mariano Rajoy.

A freak thunderstorm forced Pope Benedict, 84, to set aside the bulk of the homily he was to give on Saturday evening at a prayer vigil featuring Eucharistic Adoration. In his prepared talk (distributed later) he told the young people: "Do not be satisfied with anything less than truth and love ... Be afraid neither of the world, nor of the future, nor of your weakness." Pope Benedict urged the young people to ask God to help them find their vocations "in society and in the Church", and repeatedly focused on the importance of religious and priestly vocations. He told young nuns that this "world of relativism and mediocrity" needed their "radical witness" to Christ and the Church needed their "youthful fidelity". At a special Mass for seminarians, he counselled the young men to enter the priesthood only if they were "completely determined to exercise it in obedience to the Church's precepts". He said this included "the decision to live in celibacy ... and sincere obedience". At the end of that Mass he

announced plans to make San Juan of Avila, patron saint of Spain's diocesan clergy, a Doctor of the Church.

One of Pope Benedict's weightiest addresses was to young Catholic university professors. He told them they had to help their students find reference points rooted in faith and reason and said universities must equip students with more than "pure technical ability" and help them seek and encounter truth.

At a colourful Via Crucis ceremony in central Madrid the Pope told the young people that the various stations of the Cross should inspire them to "go in search of those who are less fortunate" and "not to pass by on the other side in the face of human suffering".