

“We Have Come to Worship Him.” (Mt. 2:2)



XX.
Weltjugendtag
Köln 2005

In August of 2005, hundreds of thousands of youth from hundreds of countries across the globe gathered in the city of Cologne, Germany, to greet the new Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI. Pope John Paul II had established the World Youth Days during his pontificate, to celebrate young people and to let them know that they are so loved by the Church! The Church *needs* our energy and talents to continue to thrive in a world that is constantly changing and moving!

The theme of this particular World Youth Day was “We Have Come to Worship Him” (Matthew 2:2). The new Pope challenged every pilgrim there to reflect on the Christmas story, particularly putting themselves in the shoes of the Magi, to follow in their footsteps in the search for the Promised One. We can look at their excitement and determination in their journey and ask ourselves: *How determined am I in my own search to find Jesus in my life, and to come to know, love and serve him better? What kind of time and talent am I laying at the feet of the one I call my King? Should I be doing more? Why were the Magi also called Wise Men, and how can I grow in that gift of wisdom in my own life?*

Within the next several pages, we will look at the Holy Father’s address to all of the pilgrims at the 2005 World Youth Day celebrations. Take a bit of time, week by week, to dive into his message and join in the journey of the Magi during this Christmas season. Underline phrases that stick out to you, because the Holy Spirit may be moving in your heart to speak to you through his words!

“... It is not ideologies that save the world, but only a return to the living God, our Creator, the guarantor of our freedom, the guarantor of what is really good and true. **True revolution consists in simply turning to God who is the measure of what is right and who at the same time is everlasting love. And what could ever save us apart from love?**”



Week 1: Introduction, and the purpose of the Magi's journey

**APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO COLOGNE
ON THE OCCASION OF THE XX WORLD YOUTH DAY**

YOUTH VIGIL

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE BENEDICT XVI

*Cologne - Marienfeld
Saturday, 20 August 2005*

Dear young friends,

In our pilgrimage with the mysterious Magi from the East, we have arrived at the moment which St Matthew describes in his Gospel with these words: "Going into the house (over which the star had halted), they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshipped him" (Mt 2: 11). Outwardly, their journey was now over. They had reached their goal.

But at this point a new journey began for them, an inner pilgrimage which changed their whole lives. Their mental picture of the infant King they were expecting to find must have been very different. They had stopped at Jerusalem specifically in order to ask the King who lived there for news of the promised King who had been born. They knew that the world was in disorder, and for that reason their hearts were troubled.

They were sure that God existed and that he was a just and gentle God. And perhaps they also knew of the great prophecies of Israel foretelling a King who would be intimately united with God, a King who would restore order to the world, acting for God and in his Name.

It was in order to seek this King that they had set off on their journey: deep within themselves they felt prompted to go in search of the true justice that can only come from God, and they wanted to serve this King, to fall prostrate at his feet and so play their part in the renewal of the world. They were among those "who hunger and thirst for justice" (Mt 5: 6). This hunger and thirst had spurred them on in their pilgrimage - they had become pilgrims in search of the justice that they expected from God, intending to devote themselves to its service.

Even if those who had stayed at home may have considered them Utopian dreamers, they were actually people with their feet on the ground, and they knew that in order to change the world it is necessary to have power. Hence, they were hardly likely to seek the promised child anywhere but in the King's palace. Yet now they were bowing down before the child of poor people, and they soon came to realize that Herod, the King they had consulted, intended to use his power to lay a trap for him, forcing the family to flee into exile . . .

Reflection Questions:

1. The people of Israel were looking for a king who would come in power, perhaps with military might and prestige, great wealth and political know-how. What do you think was going through the Magi's minds when they came to find this poor family in a stable, and the young king lying in a feeding trough, wrapped in rags??

2. The people of Israel were looking for a king who would release them from Roman occupation; a king who would establish peace in the land; a king who would relieve them of taxes so that they could clothe and feed themselves. Take a look within and ask yourself: What are some of the deepest desires of your heart, especially those that are out of your control? Do you desire peace within your family, freedom from sin, freedom from worries about money or health?

A simple act of faith:

Jesus, even with as little or as much as I know you now, I need to know you more. Open my eyes and ears so that I can see you and hear you in the less-glamorous, more ordinary tasks and situations of each day. If what others say about you is true, I need you to be my King. Come into my heart and bring me the peace that only you can give. Come be the Light of my world. Amen.

Week 2: Finding the King changes their lives and their views about God

... The new King, to whom they now paid homage, was quite unlike what they were expecting. In this way they had to learn that God is not as we usually imagine him to be. This was where their inner journey began. It started at the very moment when they knelt down before this child and recognized him as the promised King. But they still had to assimilate these joyful gestures internally.

They had to change their ideas about power, about God and about man, and in so doing, they also had to change themselves. Now they were able to see that God's power is not like that of the powerful of this world. God's ways are not as we imagine them or as we might wish them to be.

God does not enter into competition with earthly powers in this world. He does not marshal his divisions alongside other divisions. God did not send 12 legions of angels to assist Jesus in the Garden of Olives (cf. Mt 26: 53). He contrasts the noisy and ostentatious power of this world with the defenseless power of love, which succumbs to death on the Cross and dies ever anew throughout history; yet it is this same love which constitutes the new divine intervention that opposes injustice and ushers in the Kingdom of God.

God is different - this is what they now come to realize. And it means that they themselves must now become different, they must learn God's ways.

They had come to place themselves at the service of this King, to model their own kingship on his. That was the meaning of their act of homage, their adoration. Included in this were their gifts - gold, frankincense and myrrh - gifts offered to a King held to be divine. Adoration has a content and it involves giving. Through this act of adoration, these men from the East wished to recognize the child as their King and to place their own power and potential at his disposal, and in this they were certainly on the right path.

By serving and following him, they wanted, together with him, to serve the cause of good and the cause of justice in the world. In this they were right.

Now, though, they have to learn that this cannot be achieved simply through issuing commands from a throne on high. Now they have to learn to give themselves - no lesser gift would be sufficient for this King. Now they have to learn that their lives must be conformed to this divine way of exercising power, to God's own way of being.

They must become men of truth, of justice, of goodness, of forgiveness, of mercy. They will no longer ask: how can this serve me? Instead, they will have to ask: How can I serve God's presence in the world? They must learn to lose their life and in this way to find it. Having left Jerusalem behind, they must not deviate from the path marked out by the true King, as they follow Jesus . . .

Reflection Questions:

1. What ideas of power and might are pursued and portrayed in our culture? How does one become powerful or popular among peers? Is it money? Good looks? Talents? Hanging out with a certain crowd?

2. The Eucharist is the source and summit of our faith (CCC1324). Jesus chose simple substances of bread and wine and transformed them into the Bread of Life and the Cup of Salvation for all mankind. Can you draw a connection between the simplicity of this act, and the simplicity of him coming into the world as a small, poor, vulnerable, seemingly powerless little baby?

2. What was so different about this baby that brought these grown men to their knees before him? (Hint: Check out the "Theotokos" worksheet in this month's home kits.)

Week 3: What does all of this mean for my life today and my own search for God?

... Dear friends, what does all this mean for us?

What we have just been saying about the nature of God being different, and about the way our lives must be shaped accordingly, sounds very fine, but remains rather vague and unfocused. That is why God has given us examples. The Magi from the East are just the first in a long procession of men and women who have constantly tried to gaze upon God's star in their lives, going in search of the God who has drawn close to us and shows us the way.

It is the great multitude of the saints - both known and unknown - in whose lives the Lord has opened up the Gospel before us and turned over the pages; he has done this throughout history and he still does so today. In their lives, as if in a great picture-book, the riches of the Gospel are revealed. They are the shining path which God himself has traced throughout history and is still tracing today.

My venerable Predecessor Pope John Paul II, who is with us at this moment, beatified and canonized a great many people from both the distant and the recent past. Through these individuals he wanted to show us how to be Christian: how to live life as it should be lived - according to God's way. The saints and the blessed did not doggedly seek their own happiness, but simply wanted to give themselves, because the light of Christ had shone upon them.

They show us the way to attain happiness, they show us how to be truly human. Through all the ups and downs of history, they were the true reformers who constantly rescued it from plunging into the valley of darkness; it was they who constantly shed upon it the light that was needed to make sense - even in the midst of suffering - of God's words spoken at the end of the work of creation: "It is very good".

One need only think of such figures as St Benedict, St Francis of Assisi, St Teresa of Avila, St Ignatius of Loyola, St Charles Borromeo, the founders of 19-century religious orders who inspired and guided the social movement, or the saints of our own day - Maximilian Kolbe, Edith Stein, Mother Teresa, Padre Pio. In contemplating these figures we learn what it means "to adore" and what it means to live according to the measure of the Child of Bethlehem, by the measure of Jesus Christ and of God himself.

The saints, as we said, are the true reformers. Now I want to express this in an even more radical way: only from the saints, only from God does true revolution come, the definitive way to change the world.

In the last century we experienced revolutions with a common program - expecting nothing more from God, they assumed total responsibility for the cause of the world in order to change it. And this, as we saw, meant that a human and partial point of view was always taken as an absolute guiding principle. Absolutizing what is not absolute but relative is called totalitarianism. It does not liberate man, but takes away his dignity and enslaves him.

It is not ideologies that save the world, but only a return to the living God, our Creator, the guarantor of our freedom, the guarantor of what is really good and true. True revolution consists in simply turning to God who is the measure of what is right and who at the same time is everlasting love. And what could ever save us apart from love?

Reflection Questions:

1. Who is your favorite saint? What about them attracts you to their life and witness of faith?

2. How was this saint a revolutionary as Pope Benedict describes it? What about their lives set them against the culture and majority mindsets of their day?

A simple act of hope:

God, I know you call me to a life of holiness, to be a witness for you among my family, friends and peers. While sometimes this is hard, I know that you promise peace and strength to those who seek your face and do your will. Grant me the grace to run the race to the bitter end, so that I can achieve the same crown that the saints have won before me. I want to live for your glory. Amen.

Week 4: Discovering “the true face” of God and his Church.

... Dear friends! Allow me to add just two brief thoughts.

There are many who speak of God; some even preach hatred and perpetrate violence in God's Name. So it is important to discover the true face of God. The Magi from the East found it when they knelt down before the Child of Bethlehem. "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father", said Jesus to Philip (Jn 14: 9). In Jesus Christ, who allowed his heart to be pierced for us, the true face of God is seen. We will follow him together with the great multitude of those who went before us. Then we will be traveling along the right path.

This means that we are not constructing a private God, we are not constructing a private Jesus, but that we believe and worship the Jesus who is manifested to us by the Sacred Scriptures and who reveals himself to be alive in the great procession of the faithful called the Church, always alongside us and always before us.

There is much that could be criticized in the Church. We know this and the Lord himself told us so: it is a net with good fish and bad fish, a field with wheat and darnel (or “weeds”).

Pope John Paul II, as well as revealing the true face of the Church in the many saints that he canonized, also asked pardon for the wrong that was done in the course of history through the words and deeds of members of the Church. In this way he showed us our own true image and urged us to take our place, with all our faults and weaknesses, in the procession of the saints that began with the Magi from the East.

It is actually consoling to realize that there is darnel in the Church. In this way, despite all our defects, we can still hope to be counted among the disciples of Jesus, who came to call sinners.

The Church is like a human family, but at the same time it is also the great family of God, through which he establishes an overarching communion and unity that embraces every continent, culture and nation. So we are glad to belong to this great family that we see here; we are glad to have brothers and friends all over the world.

Here in Cologne we discover the joy of belonging to a family as vast as the world, including Heaven and earth, the past, the present, the future and every part of the

earth. In this great band of pilgrims we walk side by side with Christ, we walk with the star that enlightens our history.

"Going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshipped him" (Mt 2: 11). Dear friends, this is not a distant story that took place long ago. It is with us now. Here in the Sacred Host he is present before us and in our midst. As at that time, so now he is mysteriously veiled in a sacred silence; as at that time, it is here that the true face of God is revealed. For us he became a grain of wheat that falls on the ground and dies and bears fruit until the end of the world (cf. Jn 12: 24).

He is present now as he was then in Bethlehem. He invites us to that inner pilgrimage which is called adoration. Let us set off on this pilgrimage of the spirit and let us ask him to be our guide. Amen.

http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2005/august/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20050820_vigil-wyd_enhtml

Reflection Questions:

Let's unpack this idea of the Church as the family of God, a body of fellow pilgrims to travel with us through life. God gives his life to us through the Church, by way of the Sacraments. How do the Sacraments give us the grace and strength we need to make it to Heaven? Write the name of each Sacrament after its description ...

1. Re-born into the family of God, we receive his Spirit for the first time, which changes us into His son or daughter, and makes every other member of the Church our brother and sister!

2. The battle will be fierce at times; the Enemy is doing everything he can to keep us from heaven. We need healing when we fall, and the mending of our relationships with God and our brothers and sisters when we trade sides by sinning.

3. Food for the journey! Instead of this Food becoming part of our bodies like the food we eat every day, our hearts are changed and made more like his, and together we celebrate being a part of his Body. We really do become what we eat!

4. Being a witness for the Lord requires boldness and the pursuit of specific virtues. He gives us a "divine toolbelt" with many gifts to help us stay strong and on-guard against the attacks of the Enemy. The Paraclete becomes our battle-buddy, always watching our back if we stay close to him.

5. Some are called to build up the kingdom specifically by binding themselves totally and eternally to another person, and raising the next generation of saints to continue the fight. They find their path to holiness in laying their lives down in service to their spouse and children.

6. Some are called to build up the kingdom specifically by binding themselves totally and eternally to the service of the Church, and being Christ's hands and feet by administering the Sacraments to his Body. They find their path to holiness in laying their lives down in service to his Bride, and caring for their "spiritual children" in parishes, hospitals, schools, etc.

7. As we near the end of our journey, we want our last days to be full of the Lord's grace and mercy. We again reconcile to God and his family, receive the Bread of Life, and are anointed with oil to slicken our soul so that the Enemy can't keep his grip on us.

Answers:
Baptism
Reconciliation
Eucharist
Confirmation
Matrimony
Holy Orders
Anointing of the Sick