

Pope Benedict XVI in Austria

"Thus our faith is decisively opposed to the attitude of resignation that considers man incapable of truth.... This attitude, I am convinced, lies at the heart of the crisis of the West..." Selected texts from the Pope's September 7-8 visit to Austria.

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Shortly before the Holy Father's arrival, Vienna's Archbishop, Cardinal Christoph Schoenborn, said: "When

Benedict XVI speaks, it is necessary to pay close attention, for what he has to say is always very clear, important, incisive and very personal and fascinating. He will let us know what he expects of us." And so we present a selection of passages from the Pope's discourses during his pastoral visit to Austria, September 7-9, 2007. For complete texts from from the Vatican's webiste click [here](#).

In Rome on September 12: "My pastoral visit to Austria to commemorate the 850th anniversary of the shrine of Mariazell was above all a pilgrimage on the theme of 'looking to Christ'; that is, of going toward Mary, who shows Jesus to us.... To see Jesus with Mary's eyes is to encounter the Love of God, Who was made man for us and died upon the Cross.... In Vienna and Mariazell, the living, faithful and multifaceted truth of the Catholic Church appeared with particular clarity: a

Church that implements and is witness to a generous 'yes' to life in all its dimensions, a Church that renews her bi-millennial tradition at the service of a future of peace and of true social progress for the entire human family."

On arrival in Vienna, September 7:

"This cultural space in the heart of Europe transcends borders and brings together ideas and energies from various parts of the continent. The culture of this country is deeply imbued with the message of Jesus Christ and the activity the Church has carried out in His name....

"The shrine of Mariazell represents the maternal heart of Austria, and... in the person of Mary, reminds us of an essential dimension of human beings: their capacity for openness to God and His word of truth.... During these days I go as a pilgrim to Mariazell. In recent years I have

been pleased to notice among many people an increased interest in the idea of pilgrimage. Journeying as pilgrims, young people in particular have found a new way to reflect and meditate; they come to know one another and together they encounter creation and the history of faith. Often, and perhaps unexpectedly, they experience it as a source of strength for the present.

"I intend my pilgrimage to Mariazell to be a journey made in the company of all the pilgrims of our time. In this spirit I will soon lead the people in prayer in the center of Vienna. This prayer, like a spiritual pilgrimage, will accompany these days throughout your country."

At Mary's Pillar in Vienna, September 7: "Holy Mary, Immaculate Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ, in you God has given us the mode of the Church and of genuine humanity. To you I

entrust the country of Austria and its people. Help all of us to follow your example and to direct our lives completely to God! Grant that by looking to Christ, we may become ever more like Him: true children of God! Then we too, filled with every spiritual blessing, will be able to conform ourselves more fully to His will and to become instruments of His peace for Austria, Europe and the world. Amen."

At the shrine of Mariazell, September 8: "Today we join in the great centuries-old pilgrimage. We rest awhile with the Mother of the Lord, and we pray to her: 'Show us Jesus. Show to us pilgrims the one who is both the way and the destination, the truth and the life.'... Like the pilgrims of old we need an open and restless heart. This is what pilgrimage is all about. Today, as in the past, it is not enough to be more or less like everyone else and to think like

everyone else. Our lives have a deeper purpose. We need God, the God who has shown us His Face and opened His Heart to us: Jesus Christ....

"If we Christians call Him the one universal Mediator of salvation, valid for everyone and needed by everyone, ...it is because we are gripped by Him who has touched our hearts and lavished gifts upon us so that we, in turn, can offer them to others. Thus our faith is decisively opposed to the attitude of resignation that considers man incapable of truth.... This attitude, I am convinced, lies at the heart of the crisis of the West.... If truth does not exist for man, then neither can we distinguish between good and evil.... Truth proves itself in love. It is never our property, never our product, just as love can never be produced but only received and handed on as a gift. We need this inner force of

truth. We are its witnesses. We must hand it on as a gift in the same way we received it, as it has given itself to us....

"For one who is searching, this summons turns into a spontaneous plea addressed especially to Mary, who has given us Christ, her Son: 'Show us Jesus!' Let us make this prayer with our whole heart, above and beyond the present moment.... Mary responds, showing Him to us first as a Child...in the powerlessness of His love, where His true strength lies. He places Himself in our hands. He asks for our love. He invites us to become small ourselves.... He asks us to trust Him and thus to learn how to live in truth and love.... Then she shows us Jesus as the Crucified. God saved the world not by the sword but by the Cross. He extends his arms in the posture of one who prays; He transformed the Passion into prayer,

an act of love for God and for humanity....

" 'To gaze upon Christ!' If we do this, we realize that Christianity is more than a moral code, a series of requirements and laws. It is the gift of a friendship that lasts through life and death...and contains within itself great moral strength, so urgently needed today on account of the challenges of our time.... By the strength of our friendship with the living God we live this manifold 'yes' and at the same time we carry it as a signpost into this world of ours. 'Show us Jesus!' It was with this plea to the Mother of the Lord that we set off on our journey. This same plea will accompany us as we return to our daily lives."

To priests, religious, and seminarians, September 8: "Following Christ means taking on ever more fully His mind and His way of life; this is what the

Letter to the Phillipians tells us: 'Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ!' (2:5). 'Look to Christ' is the theme of these days...."

In Rome, September 12: "Such moments are precious opportunities in which Peter's Successor has the chance to exhort the leaders of nations to favor the cause of peace and true economic and social progress. With particular reference to Europe, I renewed my encouragement to continue the current process of unification on the basis of values inspired by its shared Christian heritage."

To Politicians and Diplomats, September 7: "The notion of human rights was first formulated in Europe. The fundamental human right, the presupposition of every other right, is the right to life itself—from the moment of conception until its natural end. Abortion,

consequently, cannot be a human right. It is the very opposite.... I appeal, then, to political leaders not to...abolish in practice your legal system's acknowledgment that abortion is wrong. I say this out of a concern for humanity. But that is only one side of this disturbing problem. The other is the need to do everything possible to make European countries once again open to welcoming children. Encourage young married couples to establish new families and to become mothers and fathers! You will assist not only them but you will benefit society as a whole.... Yet all this will be pointless unless we can succeed in creating once again in our countries a climate of joy and confidence in life, a climate in which children are not seen as a burden, but rather as a gift for all.... A country that has received so much must also give much!"

In Rome, September 12: "I dwelt upon the importance of Sundays, which give meaning to work and rest, renew the significance of creation and redemption, and express the value of freedom and of service to others."

In the Cathedral of Vienna, September 9: "Without the Lord, without the Lord's Day, we cannot live. That was the answer given in the year 304 by Christians in present-day Tunisia when they were caught celebrating the forbidden Sunday Eucharist....

We must once more learn to recognize the unity between the Lord and the Lord's Day. First of all, there is the gift of the Lord Himself, whom Christians simply need to have close and accessible if they are to be themselves. But this is not merely spiritual, inward accessibility. The encounter with the Lord is inscribed in time on a specific day, in our everyday communal existence. It

gives a focus, an inner order to our time and thus to the whole of our lives. For Christians the Sunday Eucharist is not a commandment but an inner necessity. Without Him who sustains our lives, life itself is empty. To do without or to betray this focus would deprive life of its very foundation, would take away its inner dignity and beauty.... Like the early Christians, we need this encounter, for by bringing us together it gives us space for freedom and lets us see beyond the bustle of everyday life to God's creative love...."

Angelus message, September 9: "The celebration of the Eucharist, carried out with due dignity, helps us to realize the immense grandeur of God's gift to us in the Holy Mass. In this way we also draw near to each other and experience the joy of God."

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