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"What must I do in order for my life to have meaning?"

Benedict XVI, in Brazil: "Young people are the main protagonists of the third millennium. ... It is they who will decide the destiny of this new stage of humanity".

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Benedict XVI arrived at the "Paulo Machado de Carvalho" municipal stadium of Pacaembu where he was welcomed by more than 40,000

young people. At the same time, tens of thousands of others followed the event on giant screens outside the stadium. The Pope then presided at the Liturgy of the Word during which passages from the Song of Songs were read out as images of Brazilian landscape were projected on the screens.

The Pope addressed the participants by quoting words used by John Paul II during his visit to the Mato Grosso in 1991: "Young people are the main protagonists of the third millennium. ... It is they who will decide the destiny of this new stage of humanity."

"WHAT MUST I DO TO HAVE ETERNAL LIFE?"

The Holy Father then turned to the central theme of his homily, the dialogue between Jesus and the rich young man as recounted in the Gospel of St. Matthew, the central

point of which is the question: "What must I do to have eternal life?"

"This query," the Pope explained, "does not only concern the future. It does not concern only the question of what happens after death. Quite the contrary, there is a commitment in the present, here and now, that must guarantee authenticity and consequently the future. In a word, the query concerns the meaning of life and could therefore be expressed thus: what must I do in order for my life to have meaning?'"

Christ, "a Master Who does not deceive, ... invites us to see God in all things and all events, even where the majority of people see only the absence of God. He encourages the rich young man "to keep the Commandments ... at the foundation of which are grace and nature." They "stimulate us to do something towards our own self-fulfillment. To

fulfil oneself through action is in fact, to become real."

"We hear talk of the fears of today's youth. These fears reveal an enormous lack of hope: fear of death; ... fear of failure for not having discovered the meaning of life; and fear of exclusion in the face of the bewildering pace of events and of communications. ... Yet when I look upon you young people present here ... I see you as Christ sees you: a gaze full of love and trust, in the certainty that you have found the true path. You are the youth of the Church. ... Be apostles to the young!"

"There exists, in the final analysis, an immense field of action in which social, economic and political questions are particularly important, so long as their source of inspiration is always the Gospel and the Church's social doctrine. The building of a more just and united, reconciled and

peaceful society; the commitment to halt violence; initiatives aimed at promoting fullness of life, democratic order and the common good and, especially, those that seek to eliminate certain forms of discrimination that exist in Latin American society ... are not grounds for exclusion but for mutual enrichment."

THE PERIOD OF COURTSHIP AND ENGAGEMENT

The Holy Father called on young people to maintain "great respect for the Sacrament of Marriage," and "to respect one another during the period of courtship and engagement." He also highlighted how some of them "are called to a total and definitive sacrifice, consecrating themselves to God in the religious life ... and bearing witness to the hope of the heavenly

Kingdom among all men and women."

"Youth is a form of wealth," said Benedict XVI returning to consider the dialogue between Jesus and the rich young man, "because it leads to the rediscovery of life as a gift and as a task." But the young man of the Gospel, "at the moment of the great choice, did not have the courage to wager everything on Jesus Christ, ... he realized that he lacked the generosity and this prevented him from complete fulfillment."

"Do not waste your youth," Pope Benedict concluded, "do not seek to flee it. ... Consecrate it to the ideals of faith and of human solidarity. You young people are not just the future of the Church and of humanity, as if you were trying to flee the present moment. On the contrary, you are the existing youth of the Church and of humanity. You are the young face

... without which the Church would be disfigured."

Benedict XVI then added: "God's charity is infinite, and the Lord asks us, or rather he requires us, to expand our hearts so as to contain ever more love, goodness, and understanding for our fellows and for the problems that involve not only human coexistence but also the effective preservation and protection of the natural environment, of which we are all a part".

"Our woods have more life," added the Pope quoting from the Brazilian national anthem. "Do not let this flame of hope go out. ... The environmental devastation of the Amazon and the threat to the human dignity of its people call for greater commitment in various fields of social activity."

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