

Pope John Paul encourages 15,000 young people to revitalize the rich patrimony of Europe

On September 3, thousands of young people listened to a recorded message from the Pope at a conference of Catholic Action in Loreto, Italy. Besides emphasizing the role young people must play in building a new Europe, the Holy Father declared that “a civilization of love cannot be established by separating the Gospel from culture.”

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More than 15,000 young people took part in a festival of prayer and fun at the Italian Marian Shrine of Loreto in the late evening of September 3.

Songs by Italian performers alternated with the personal testimonies of young people from Sudan, Iraq, Spain, and Bosnia.

The pilgrimage-festival organized by Italian Catholic Action began Sept. 1 and closed with the celebration of Holy Mass, during which the Pope beatified three Catholic Action members (Alberto Marvelli, Pina Suriano, and Pere Tarres i Claret). More than 200,000 attended the Mass.

The program included a recorded greeting from the Pope to a group of young people who had given him in

Castelgandolfo a few days earlier a “Letter from the Christian Youth of Europe” composed by pilgrims taking part in the Holy Year of St. James at Santiago de Compostela in Spain.

The Pope asked the youth to be “witnesses of Christ in order to give Europe new hope. This is the message you must spread among your contemporaries and to the entire European Community. The dream you must carry in your heart is to make Europe proud of its rich cultural and religious patrimony and appreciative of human life by welcoming solidarity, justice, and peace.”

“You must not be ashamed of the Gospel, for a civilization of love cannot be established if the Gospel is separated from culture. Rather, the goal must be to seek an ever new synthesis between them.”

The Pope told the young people to nourish a desire to travel along this path “in order to revive the rich patrimony of their continent, so that it recover its memory of past mistakes, but even more, to help it recover its spiritual roots. To carry out this mission,” he said, “you must be faithful to Christ and His Church, and practice heroic sanctity with coherence and valor. That is the path the holy men and women of Europe have taken for centuries. May their testimony be a stimulus for each one of you, dear young people who are with me today on radio and television.”

The festival ended with a silent pilgrimage to the Holy House of Loreto.

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