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Training in Holiness

I. Introduction

- A. Three weeks ago we began the Year of Faith, a time dedicated not only to getting to know our faith better, but principally to live and walk by faith better, so that all of us, like St. Paul, may be able to say, “It is no longer I who live, by Christ who lives in me and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself up for me.”
- B. In his letter announcing the Year of Faith, Pope Benedict indicated that the saints are the great icons of faithful living, those who trust in the Lord so much that they believe and act on what he said and called them to. In the beautiful last part of *Porta Fidei*, he gives what I’d like to call an update on one of the most consoling and inspiring parts of Sacred Scripture that is very relevant to today’s feast.
- C. He retraces the history of our faith as it’s been lived in the saints so that we might in turn learn how to live it with greater vitality.
 1. He encourages us to focus on “the examples of faith that have marked these two thousand years of our salvation history.”
 2. It’s a fitting sequel to the great “cloud of witnesses” of Hebrews 11 that illustrates how “Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” and mentions:
 - Abel
 - Enoch
 - Noah
 - Abraham
 - Sarah
 - Isaac
 - Jacob
 - Joseph
 - Moses
 - The Israelites who crossed the red sea
 - Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets
 3. Pope Benedict also mentions a New Testament cloud:
 - a. By faith, Mary ...
 - b. By faith, **the Apostles** ...
 - c. By faith, **the disciples** ...
 - d. By faith, the **martyrs**
 - e. By faith, **men and women have consecrated their lives to Christ, leaving all things behind so as to live obedience, poverty and chastity with Gospel simplicity,** concrete signs of waiting for the Lord who comes without delay.
 - f. By faith, **countless Christians** have promoted **action for justice** so as to put into practice the word of the Lord, who came to proclaim deliverance from oppression and a year of favour for all (cf. *Lk* 4:18-19).
 - g. By faith, across the centuries, **men and women of all ages**, whose names are written in the Book of Life (cf. *Rev* 7:9, 13:8), **have confessed the beauty of following the Lord Jesus** wherever they were called to bear witness to the fact that they were Christian: in the family, in the workplace, in public life, in the exercise of the charisms and ministries to which they were called.
 - h. By faith, we too live: by the living recognition of the Lord Jesus, present in our lives and in our history.
 4. This points to the importance of saints in showing what faith is, who en flesh the Gospel and the joy that it bears with it, who introduce us to how God lives in a human being and a human being in God. They demonstrate for us faith working through love.

- D. This is particularly an important point for young people. You are now at a stage in life in which you're making choices for yourself, not just choices as to how you're going to spend your time without asking for permissions like you used to at home, but also choices about what you're going to do with your life. It's a time when you're called by God to make your own a trajectory toward holiness. The Church and the world needs you to do this.
- E. When Pope Benedict was in England two years ago, he spoke to students. He noted that he doesn't often have the chance to speak to students and said that he thought quite a bit about what to say and he decided to speak to them about what is most important of all. "What God wants most of all for each one of you," he said, "is that you should become holy. He loves you much more than you could ever begin to imagine, and he wants the very best for you. And by far the best thing for you is to grow in holiness."
- F. He went on: "Perhaps some of you have never thought about this before. Perhaps some of you think being a saint is not for you. ... When I invite you to become saints, I am asking you not to be content with second best. I am asking you not to pursue one limited goal and ignore all the others. Having money makes it possible to be generous and to do good in the world, but on its own, it is not enough to make us happy. Being highly skilled in some activity or profession is good, but it will not satisfy us unless we aim for something greater still. It might make us famous, but it will not make us happy. Happiness is something we all want, but one of the great tragedies in this world is that so many people never find it, because they look for it in the wrong places. The key to it is very simple – true happiness is to be found in God. We need to have the courage to place our deepest hopes in God alone, not in money, in a career, in worldly success, or in our relationships with others, but in God. Only he can satisfy the deepest needs of our hearts.
- G. Not only does God love us with a depth and an intensity that we can scarcely begin to comprehend, but he invites us to respond to that love. ... God wants your friendship. And once you enter into friendship with God, everything in your life begins to change. As you come to know him better, you find you want to reflect something of his infinite goodness in your own life. You are attracted to the practice of virtue. You begin to see greed and selfishness and all the other sins for what they really are, destructive and dangerous tendencies that cause deep suffering and do great damage, and you want to avoid falling into that trap yourselves. You begin to feel compassion for people in difficulties and you are eager to do something to help them. You want to come to the aid of the poor and the hungry, you want to comfort the sorrowful, you want to be kind and generous. And once these things begin to matter to you, you are well on the way to becoming saints."
- H. On this All Saints Day, we celebrate not only all of those who became friends of God, all of those for whom loving faith in God was the defining characteristic of their life, all of those who now experience the fullness of happiness for which God made us, but it's meant to stoke our own desires for heaven and, in desiring that end, begin to will the means. We don't become holy by default. We become holy by choice, by saying yes to the graces God has given us to live by faith in him. Yesterday at daily Mass, we had that powerful passage in which someone asked Jesus how many will be saved. Jesus replied not by answering their curiosity, but by saying, "Strive — the Greek word is "agonize" to enter through the narrow gate." He tells them not how many will be saved, but HOW to be saved. We have to agonize, like he did in the Garden, "not my will but thine be done!" We have to agonize to deny ourselves, pick up our Cross and follow him on the path to happiness. We have to agonize, to make the effort. Jesus reminds us that many don't make it. He says that there will be some who are left outside knocking, whom Jesus says that he will say, "I never knew you." They were followers only on the outside, they might even call Jesus their friend, but only like a Facebook friend. "We ate and drank with you." "We heard you teach in our synagogues." In St. Matthew's Gospel it gets even more stark. "We prophesied in your name. We cast out demons in your name. We worked many miracles in your name." Jesus says he'll respond, "I never knew you."
- I. The reality we have to confront is that Jesus wants us to be saints, he's prepared to give us all the graces we need to become saints, but most of us aren't at all "agonizing" to become saints. He tells us in St. Matthew's Gospel, "The road to perdition is wide and easy and there are many on it, but the road that leads to life is narrow and few find it." It's a snap shot of the way people are going. Thanks be to God it's not an image of the way everything necessarily ends up, because the whole mission of the Church is to try to help people get off the broad highway to hell onto the narrow, uphill path of love, the way of the Cross that leads to life, but that's at least where people are. And to change paths requires conversion. It requires us not to live as everyone else lives. Not to think as everyone else thinks. Not to be satisfied just because we live the way the

majority does. It requires to be different, to separate ourselves to be with Jesus, with 100% of our mind, heart, soul and strength, so that together with Jesus we can return to help him save others.

- J. The conversion required is the conversion we heard about at Mass. The world believes that to be happy, you have to be rich; Jesus says we need to be poor in spirit and treasure his kingdom above everything, to make the choice the Rich Young Man didn't, and use all we have for the good of others, become rich in the kingdom, and follow him. The world says that you have to be a party animal; Jesus says that we need to be so sensitive to others that we mourn over their physical, material, emotional misfortune. The world says that you have to be strong and powerful, finish fights that others unwisely start, teach them lessons they'll never forget, and become a dominant superpower. Jesus says, rather, blessed are the meek — like martial arts experts who don't have to fight back — and blessed are not the "peace-wishers," but the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. The world thinks that to be happy you have to have all your sexual fantasies fulfilled; Jesus teaches we need to be pure of heart and see him, and reverence him in others, never desecrating the temple of the Holy Spirit we are and others are. The world says that we'll be happy when we're voted most popular in our high school senior class, when others all say only good things about us, and we're given all types of accolades, awards and honorary doctorates; Jesus says, blessed are you when they persecute you, hate you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely because of me, for your reward will be great in heaven. To live the beatitudes as Jesus incarnated each of the beatitudes isn't easy. It's in fact, agonizing, but it's the way for us to become blessed by hungering and thirsting for holiness, because it's only on this path that a desire for holiness will be satisfied.
- K. In today's talk, I've been asked to speak to you about the path to heaven, about the means we're called to take to become saints, so that we may one day live in a communion of love within the communion of persons who is God and in communion with all the saints. To achieve the end, we have to recognize it's possible and will the means.
- L. On the first point, I want to speak to you about two scenes in the lives of famous saints that have always had an impact on me.
1. St. Teresa of Avila with Rodrigo in the backyard. Teresa was fascinated by accounts of the lives of the saints, and ran away from home at age seven with her brother Rodrigo to find martyrdom among the Moors. Her uncle stopped them as he was returning to the city, having spotted the two outside the city walls.
 2. St. Ignatius of Loyola hungered to be a saint. He asked the questions: "Why can't I do what Francis did? Why can't I do what Dominic did?"
- M. But after recognizing the possibility, we have to do what they did, we have to imitate their hunger for holiness and follow the means.
- N. Perhaps no Pope in history has acted on the Church's mission to form saints more than Blessed Pope John Paul II. Over the course of his Pontificate, he beatified and canonized more blessed and saints than all his predecessors did over the previous 500 years. He constantly called all people to holiness and lifted up for them models in every way of life to help them see that it's possible likewise for them. He also wanted young people to know that they were called to sanctity, not just a goal of their life that they can begin to take seriously much later, but now. When he beatified Francisco and Jacinta Marto, two of the Fatima seers, he specifically preached about how they show us that if they could become genuinely holy by the age of 10, we can become holy too. It's not something that happens when our hair becomes gray, white, blue or lost.
1. He said in his beatification homily that God the Father often hides himself from the "wise and the clever" of the world but reveals himself to the merest of children." He said that they became saints so fast because they were "enrolled in the school of Our Lady," which is a school of holiness. "This," he said, "was how the little shepherds became saints so quickly. A woman who gave hospitality to Jacinta in Lisbon, on hearing the very beautiful and wise advice that the little girl gave, asked who taught it to her. "It was Our Lady", she replied. Devoting themselves with total generosity to the direction of such a good Teacher, Jacinta and Francisco soon reached the heights of perfection."
- O. In preparation for WYD in 1999 in Rome, John Paul II wrote, "God created us to share in his very own life; he calls us to be his children, living members of the mystical Body of Christ, luminous temple of the Spirit of Love. He calls us to be his: he wants us all to be saints. Dear young people, may it be your holy ambition to be holy, as He is holy. You will ask me: but is it possible today to be saints? If we had to rely only on human strength, the undertaking would be truly impossible. You are well aware, in fact, of your successes

and your failures; you are aware of the heavy burdens weighing on man, the many dangers which threaten him and the consequences caused by his sins. At times we may be gripped by discouragement and even come to think that it is impossible to change anything either in the world or in ourselves. Although the journey is difficult, we can do everything in the One who is our Redeemer... With Christ, saintliness - the divine plan for every baptized person - becomes possible. Rely on Him; ... Jesus walks with you, he renews your heart and strengthens you with the vigour of his Spirit. Do not be afraid to be the saints of the new millennium! ... The Lord wants you to be intrepid apostles of his Gospel and builders of a new humanity.”

P. In his message for the WYD in 2002 in Toronto, he built on this message to the young to become saints now, not later: “How many saints, especially young saints, can we count in the Church’s history! In their love for God their heroic virtues shone before the world, and so they became models of life which the Church has held up for imitation by all. Let us remember only a few of them: Agnes of Rome, Andrew of Phú Yên, Pedro Calungsod, Josephine Bakhita, Thérèse of Lisieux, Pier Giorgio Frassati, Marcel Callo, Francisco Castelló Aleu or again Kateri Tekakwitha, the young Iroquois called “the Lily of the Mohawks”. Through the intercession of this great host of witnesses, may God make you too, dear young people, the saints of the third millennium.”

II. And John Paul II focused on the means. At the beginning of this new millennium, he wrote an exhortation for the entire Church in which he tried to impart a real training in holiness. He called it the Church’s pastoral plan for the Third Christian Millennium. The principal purpose of the Church, Pope John Paul II said in 2001, is to be a school of holiness, what we might call a vocational school in which people are trained in holiness. He then gave us the principles of this training, what we might call the “core curriculum,” which is a path he himself took. This is the path he wants us to take. This is the path to heaven.

III. What I’d like to do is to do a “lectio divina,” a divine reading, of this section on the real pillars of holiness that John Paul II was proposing to the world. Then I’d like to add two other considerations that are particularly important for young people in seeking holiness.

IV. The Universal Call To Holiness in the Church

A. “First of all,” John Paul II told us, “I have no hesitation in saying that all pastoral initiatives must be set in relation to holiness.”

1. Everything the Church does must be related to divinizing the human person. By this he does not mean merely preaching, celebrating the sacraments, prayer and works of mercy. He also means that Catholic education, Catholic health care, social justice work, RCIA ministry, rectory office activities, budgets, capital campaigns — in short everything the Church does— must be set in relation to bringing those involved in them, as agents and recipients, to holiness.

B. “It is necessary therefore,” he continued, “to rediscover the full PRACTICAL significance of Chapter 5 of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium, dedicated to the “universal call to holiness.”

1. Notice the word “practical” here. The universal call to holiness is pretty well known today as an ideal or asymptote, but its practical consequences in the day-to-day existence in the Church and in the lives of those in the Church still has a long way to go.

2. One of the hesitations that people have to saying that the whole purpose of the Church is to be a “vocational school for training in holiness” is that many people, when they think of the calling to be saints, interpret it as something beyond them, much like most would respond if we said “everyone is called to get a doctoral degree” or “every little league baseball player is called to make the major leagues.” It seems unrealistic. But we need to change our principles of what is realistic for God.

C. “The Council Fathers laid such stress on [the universal call to holiness], not just to embellish ecclesiology with a kind of spiritual veneer, but to make the call to holiness an intrinsic and essential aspect of their teaching on the Church. The rediscovery of the Church as “mystery”, or as a people “gathered together by the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit”, was bound to bring with it a rediscovery of the Church’s “holiness”, understood in the basic sense of belonging to him who is in essence the Holy One, the “thrice Holy” (cf. Is 6:3). To profess the Church as holy means to point to her as the Bride of Christ, for whom he gave himself precisely in order to make her holy (cf. Eph 5:25-26). This as it were objective gift of holiness is offered to all the baptized.

1. By our baptism we have been called to real spiritual greatness.

2. In my preparation of those to receive the sacraments of initiation, I always stress that the goal of this formation is not just to make them a Catholic, but a good Catholic. Weeks later, I tell them that the goal is not just to make them a good Catholic, but a saint, someone who belongs to God.
 3. This is the closest thing that JP II gives to a definition of holiness: “belonging to God who is holy, holy, holy.”
- D. “But the [objective gift of holiness] in turn becomes a TASK, which must shape the WHOLE of Christian life: “This is the will of God, your sanctification” (1 Th 4:3). It is a duty that concerns not only certain Christians: “All the Christian faithful, of whatever state or rank, are called to the fullness of the Christian life and to the perfection of charity.”
1. We have a responsibility with respect to the gift. We remember the parable of the talents. The Lord wants us to invest the gift and bear him interest. We are not supposed to bury it in the ground. Our greatest talents are not our singing ability, or intelligence, or ability compassionately to listen to others. Our greatest talents, gifts, are what the Lord gives us, the sacraments, prayer, the Crosses, opportunities to love him in others.
 2. Holiness is supposed to share the whole of Christian life. We cannot compartmentalize our faith, with our relationship with God only being part of it, alongside family and work and our hobbies. God must be the center of who we are and what we do.
 3. Here we get a second and third definition of holiness:
 - a. Before it was to belong totally to the Triune God
 - b. Now it’s the fullness of the Christian life — this is the path to real fulfillment and happiness!
 - c. Perfection of love — The Christian life is all about love, both our being loved by God and our loving him and others in response. This is why it’s the fullness of Christian life because we were made in the image of God who is love precisely to love as he loves.
- E. Before we move on, however, we need to tackle a few objections that John Paul II himself raised: How do we make the call to holiness more practical? Can holiness be planned? What would it mean to relate all things the Church does in concrete ways to growth in our belonging to him who is holy, holy, holy, to the fullness of Christian life and the perfection of love?
1. John Paul II admitted, “At first glance, it might seem almost impractical to recall this elementary truth as the foundation of the pastoral planning. ... In fact, to place pastoral planning under the heading of holiness is a choice filled with consequences. It implies the conviction that, since Baptism is a true entry into the holiness of God through incorporation into Christ and the indwelling of his Spirit, it would be a contradiction to settle for a life of mediocrity, marked by a minimalist ethic and a shallow religiosity. To ask catechumens: “Do you wish to receive Baptism?” means at the same time to ask them: “Do you wish to become holy?” It means to set before them the radical nature of the Sermon on the Mount: “Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Mt 5:48).
- F. One of the reasons why some react against this universal call to holiness, John Paul II argues, is precisely because people misunderstand what holiness is:
1. “This ideal of perfection must not be misunderstood as if it involved some kind of extraordinary existence, possible only for a few “uncommon heroes” of holiness.
 - a. We might think that to become a saint we need to wear a hair-shirt, or fast on bread and water for years, learn ancient Latin, Hebrew and Greek and become a Biblical scholar, leave the world and go out to a desert monastery, spend eight hours a day or more in Eucharistic adoration. No!
 2. “The ways of holiness are many, according to the vocation of each individual.” He went on to say how blessed he was to be able to “beatify and canonize a large number of Christians, and among them many lay people who attained holiness in the most ordinary circumstances of life.
 - a. He beatified 1,338 and canonized another 482 men and women boys and girls.
 - b. He beatified in 1990 Pier Giorgio Frassati and lifted him up in a particular way for all young people.
 - i. “Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope” (1 Peter 3:15). In our century, Pier Giorgio Frassati **incarnated** these words of St. Peter in his own life. The power of the Spirit of Truth, united to Christ, made him a modern witness to the hope that springs from the Gospel and to the grace of salvation which works in human hearts. Thus he became a living witness and courageous defender of this hope in the name of Christian youth of the twentieth century.

- ii. Faith and charity, the true driving forces of his existence, made him active and diligent in the milieu in which he lived, in his family and school, in the university and society; they transformed him into a joyful, enthusiastic apostle of Christ, a passionate follower of his message and charity. The secret of his apostolic zeal and holiness is to be sought in the ascetical and spiritual journey which he traveled; in prayer, in persevering adoration, even at night, of the Blessed Sacrament, in his thirst for the Word of God, which he sought in Biblical texts; in the peaceful acceptance of life's difficulties, in family life as well; in chastity lived as a cheerful, uncompromising discipline; in his daily love of silence and life's "ordinariness." It is precisely in these factors that we are given to understand the deep well-spring of his spiritual vitality. Indeed, it is through the Eucharist that Christ communicates his Spirit; it is through listening to the word that the readiness to welcome others grows, and it is also through prayerful abandonment to God's will that life's great decisions mature. Only by adoring God who is present in his or her own heart can the baptized Christian respond to the person who "asks you for a reason for your hope" (1 Pt 3:15). And the young Frassati knew it, felt it, lived it. In his life, faith was fused with charity: firm in faith and active in charity, because without works, faith is dead (cf. James 2:20).
 - iii. Certainly, at a superficial glance, Frassati's lifestyle, that of a modern young man who was full of life, does not present anything out of the ordinary. This, however, is the originality of his virtue, which invites us to reflect upon it and impels us to imitate it. In him faith and daily events are harmoniously fused, so that adherence to the Gospel is translated into loving care for the poor and the needy in a continual crescendo until the very last days of the sickness which led to his death. His love for beauty and art, his passion for sports and mountains, his attention to society's problems did not inhibit his constant relationship with the Absolute. Entirely immersed in the mystery of God and totally dedicated to the constant service of his neighbor: thus we can sum up his earthly life!
 - iv. Today's celebration invites all of us to receive the message which Pier Giorgio Frassati is sending to the men and women of our day, but especially to you young people, who want to make a concrete contribution to the spiritual renewal of our world, which sometimes seems to be falling apart and wasting away because of a lack of ideals. By his example he proclaims that a life lived in Christ's Spirit, the Spirit of the Beatitudes, is "blessed", and that only the person who becomes a "man or woman of the Beatitudes" can succeed in communicating love and peace to others. He repeats that it is really worth giving up everything to serve the Lord. He testifies that holiness is possible for everyone, and that only the revolution of charity can enkindle the hope of a better future in the hearts of people.
 - v. He left this world rather young, but he made a mark upon our entire century, and not only on our century. He left this world, but in the Easter power of his Baptism, he can say to everyone, especially to the young generations of today and tomorrow: "You will see me, because I live and you will live" (Jn 14:19). These words were spoken by Jesus Christ when he took leave of his Apostles before undergoing his Passion. I like to think of them as forming on the lips of our new Blessed himself as a persuasive invitation to live from Christ and in Christ. This invitation is still valid, it is valid today as well, especially for today's young people, valid for everyone. It is a valid invitation which Pier Giorgio Frassati has left for us. Amen.
3. All of this led John Paul II to say in NMI, "The time has come to re-propose wholeheartedly to everyone this high standard of ordinary Christian living: the whole life of the Christian community and of Christian families must lead in this direction.
- a. Holiness is supposed to be a Christian's ordinary existence.
 - b. It's still heroic, but it's a "common heroism." To be a saint is to have heroic virtue. We're called to be heroes in ordinary life. God always gives the graces that correspond to a call.
 - c. He calls us to a "high standard of ordinary Christian living" in our Churches and in our homes. The time for the low standard is over. This parish mission in a particular way is meant to help us first adopt this high standard and the second become aware of, and choose, the means.

V. Making the Universal Call to Holiness Practical

- A. "It is also clear however that the paths to holiness are personal and call for a genuine "training in holiness", adapted to people's needs.

1. Like athletes, or singers, or people being a new profession, we need training. We need a teacher and a set of practices so that we can become heroically virtuous, grow in the perfection of charity, grow in consciousness of our belonging to the Lord.
- B. He began by talking about the major means: This training must integrate
1. the resources offered to everyone
 - a. sacraments, Eucharistic adoration, the Bible, the Catechism, documents of the magisterium, lives of the saints
 2. with both the traditional forms of individual
 - a. : confession, spiritual direction
 3. and group assistance
 - a. retreats, parish missions, pilgrimages
 4. as well as the more recent forms of support offered in associations and movements recognized by the Church
 - a. such as Communion and Liberation, Opus Dei, the charismatic renewal, the focolare, the NCW, Teams of Our Lady, vibrant third orders, and several others.
 - b. These groups provide a real training, a way of life, a plan of life, that is practical.
 - c. Religious have a rule that's been approved by the Church as a path that, when the rule is lived well, will help make them holy. In the rites of profession of many religious orders, the bishop or superior, in handing them the rule, says something to this effect: "If you keep this rule well, and live it with love, I promise you heaven."
 - d. Likewise, these new movements have a way of living approved by the Church that is geared to helping us in practical ways to seek holiness.
- C. So there are many of these helps. John Paul II, however, then wanted to highlight what he considered the six pillars of a training in holiness. For those of you who have never read NMI, I'd like to just pause and ask you to consider what you might think they'd be? What do you think would be the basic foundational stones to grow in a holy life?
- D. Before I mention what the six are, I'd just like to recall the story of the leper Naaman from the Book of Kings. He had traveled down from Syria asking for a miracle and was disappointed when Elisha told him to go wash seven times in the Jordan. He thought he would have to do something extraordinary. He resisted at first, not thinking it would work, but those who loved him told him to do what he was told to do. He did and he was totally cured.
- E. In a similar way, when I tell you what the six things JP II mentioned as the pillars of a training in holiness, you might say that these are just like the ordinary water of the Jordan and be tempted to respond to them not as the six clues to finding an eternal treasure, but as six ordinary ways that, in some sense, you may already be living, but which up until now haven't seemed to have anywhere near the impact John Paul II thinks they should have. Please remember Naaman as you hear what they are:
1. Prayer
 2. Mass, especially on Sunday
 3. Confession
 4. Listening to the Word of God
 5. Proclaiming the Word of God
 6. Grace
- F. With regard to these practices, many of us perhaps are like a little kid or a senior who starts using a computer for the first time. We might use it just to send a few emails, or to look at photos, or to play a game, but a computer can do so much more but we need training, teaching, to take advantage of it. It's the same way with these six gifts. They have the power to make us great saints, if we learn how to take advantage of what they contain within.
- G. I'd like to spend a little bit of time on each of them. My hope would be, John Paul II's hope would be, that you'd spend a lifetime developing them.
- H. Prayer
1. "This training in holiness calls for a Christian life distinguished above all in the art of prayer."
 2. "We have to learn to pray: as it were learning this art ever anew from the lips of the Divine Master himself, like the first disciples: "Lord, teach us to pray!" (Lk 11:1). Prayer develops that conversation

with Christ which makes us his intimate friends: "Abide in me and I in you" (Jn 15:4). This reciprocity is the very substance and soul of the Christian life, and the condition of all true pastoral life. Wrought in us by the Holy Spirit, this reciprocity opens us, through Christ and in Christ, to contemplation of the Father's face."

3. He proposes the mystics as the great teachers.
4. But he also talks about the danger of a tepid prayer life. "It would be wrong," he said, "to think that ordinary Christians can be content with a shallow prayer that is unable to fill their whole life. Especially in the face of the many trials to which today's world subjects faith, they would be not only mediocre Christians but "Christians at risk". They would run the insidious risk of seeing their faith progressively undermined, and would perhaps end up succumbing to the allure of "substitutes", accepting alternative religious proposals and even indulging in far-fetched superstitions.
5. It is therefore essential that education in prayer should become in some way a key-point of all pastoral planning.

I. Sunday Eucharist

1. Our principal attention must be given to the liturgy, "the summit towards which the Church's action tends and at the same time the source from which comes all her strength."
2. Eucharistic Amazement.
3. Living off the Eucharist
4. Sharing in the Eucharist should really be the heart of Sunday for every baptized person.
5. It is a fundamental duty, to be fulfilled not just in order to observe a precept but as something felt as essential to a truly informed and consistent Christian life.
6. Martyrs of Abitene. Sine dominico non possumus.
7. Keeping us together: "In many regions Christians are, or are becoming, a "little flock" (Lk 12:32). This presents them with the challenge, often in isolated and difficult situations, to bear stronger witness to the distinguishing elements of their own identity. The duty to take part in the Eucharist every Sunday is one of these. The Sunday Eucharist which every week gathers Christians together as God's family round the table of the Word and the Bread of Life, is also the most natural antidote to dispersion. It is the privileged place where communion is ceaselessly proclaimed and nurtured. Precisely through sharing in the Eucharist, the Lord's Day also becomes the Day of the Church, when she can effectively exercise her role as the sacrament of unity."
8. What's said about Sunday Mass is also applicable to daily Mass when we can.
9. St. John Vianney described the power of the Eucharist to make them saints. He used an unforgettable image: "Next to this sacrament, we are like someone who dies of hunger next to a river, just needing to bend the head down to drink; or like a poor man next to a treasure chest, when all that is needed is to stretch out the hand."
10. All we needed, he said, to advance on the path to holiness and heaven was to come thirsty to Mass to receive the Living Water and poor to receive the world's greatest treasure. He tried to get them to "upgrade" their faith from weekly communicants to daily. He lamented how many good people remained merely good: "What a shame! If they communicated more often, they would be saints."

J. The Sacrament of Reconciliation

1. "I am also asking for renewed pastoral courage in ensuring that the day-to-day teaching of Christian communities persuasively and effectively presents the practice of the Sacrament of Reconciliation."
2. We can't become saints if we're carrying our sins around.
3. The foundation of the Sacrament is found on Easter Sunday. Every reconciliation is a resurrection.
4. Devotion to Divine Mercy. Jesus wants us to adore him in his mercy, to recognize our need for it, come to receive it and share it.
5. JP II said it's the greatest way for the young spiritually to mature. To know themselves. To know how much and why they need God's help.

K. Listening to the Word of God

1. This primacy of holiness and prayer is inconceivable without a renewed listening to the word of God.
2. B16's Verbum Domini on the Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church.
 - a. The saints are those "who have truly lived the word of God," who "let themselves be shaped by the word of God through listening, reading and assiduous meditation."

- b. B16: “The most profound interpretation of Scripture comes precisely from those who let themselves be shaped by the word of God. ... I am thinking for example of Saint Anthony the Abbot, who was moved by hearing Christ’s words: “if you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me” (*Mt 19:21*).... Saint Francis of Assisi – we learn from Thomas of Celano – “upon hearing that the disciples of Christ must possess neither gold, nor silver nor money, nor carry a bag, nor bread, nor a staff for the journey, nor sandals nor two tunics ... exulting in the Holy Spirit, immediately cried out: “This is what I want, this is what I ask for, this I long to do with all my heart!”. ... Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus discovered that love was her personal vocation by poring over the Scriptures, especially Chapters 12 and 13 of the *First Letter to the Corinthians*; the same saint describes the attraction of the Scriptures: “No sooner do I glance at the Gospel, but immediately I breathe in the fragrance of the life of Jesus and I know where to run”. Every saint is like a ray of light streaming forth from the word of God: We can think of Saint Ignatius of Loyola in his search for truth and in his discernment of spirits; Saint John Bosco in his passion for the education of the young; Saint John Mary Vianney in his awareness of the grandeur of the priesthood as gift and task; Saint Pius of Pietrelcina in his serving as an instrument of divine mercy; Saint Josemaria Escrivá in his preaching of the universal call to holiness; Blessed Teresa of Calcutta, the missionary of God’s charity towards the poorest of the poor, and then the martyrs of Nazism and Communism, represented by Saint Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein), a Carmelite nun, and by Blessed Aloysius Stepinac, the Cardinal Archbishop of Zagreb.”
- c. They are the ones whose lives were “good soil” that received the seed of the word of God and bore fruit 30, 60 or 100-fold. The same is supposed to happen in us!
3. Crisis on the word of God in the Church.
 - a. 3% of Sunday Mass going Catholics have contact with the Bible during the week.
4. More than merely Bible study we should engage in prayerful *lectio divina*.
 - a. It opens with the reading (*lectio*) of a text, which leads to a desire to understand its true content: *what does the biblical text say in itself?*
 - b. Next comes meditation (*meditatio*), which asks: *what does the biblical text say to us?*
 - c. Following this comes prayer (*oratio*), which asks the question: *what do we say to the Lord in response to his word?*
 - d. Finally, *lectio divina* concludes with contemplation (*contemplatio*), during which we take up, as a gift from God, his own way of seeing and judging reality, and ask ourselves *what conversion of mind, heart and life is the Lord asking of us?*
 - e. Actio
5. Every family is meant to have a Bible.
- L. Proclaiming the Word of God
 1. To nourish ourselves with the word in order to be "servants of the word" in the work of evangelization: this is surely a priority for the Church at the dawn of the new millennium.
 2. Those who have come into genuine contact with Christ cannot keep him for themselves, they must proclaim him.
 3. We become “martyrs,” witnesses of the word, proclaiming not just with our lips but our lives, by our charity.
 4. B16’s called for a Biblical apostolate, animating all aspects of the Church’s life.
 5. As any teacher knows, when we begin to teach something, we learn something much better. Likewise, the more we proclaim the word of God, the more we grow in our understanding of it, in our living it.
 6. This is crucial for the New Evangelization. John Paul II makes a specific reference to the New Evangelization so that we can help enroll others in this school of holiness that is the Church:
 - a. Even in countries evangelized many centuries ago, the reality of a "Christian society" which, amid all the frailties which have always marked human life, measured itself explicitly on Gospel values, is now gone. ... Over the years, I have often repeated the summons to the new evangelization. I do so again now, especially in order to insist that we must rekindle in ourselves the impetus of the beginnings and allow ourselves to be filled with the ardour of the apostolic preaching which

followed Pentecost. We must revive in ourselves the burning conviction of Paul, who cried out: "Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel" (1 Cor 9:16).

M. Primacy of grace

1. There is a temptation that perennially besets every spiritual journey and pastoral work: that of thinking that the results depend on our ability to act and to plan. God of course asks us really to cooperate with his grace, and therefore invites us to invest all our resources of intelligence and energy in serving the cause of the Kingdom. But it is fatal to forget that "without Christ we can do nothing" (cf. Jn 15:5).
2. Holiness is principally about allowing God to do his work in us.
3. St. Therese and the elevator. Responding to God. *Fiat not faciam*.

N. Summary of these points:

1. In his 1999 WYD message, he said, "To succeed in this demanding project of life, continue to listen to His Word, draw strength from the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist and Penance."
2. Later, after the publication of NMI, he said in his 2002 message to the young people of the world, "Dear friends, ... I invite you to read and study the Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, which I wrote at the beginning of the year to accompany all Christians on this new stage of the life of the Church and humanity. ... In your Dioceses and parishes, in your movements, associations and communities, Christ is calling you. The Church welcomes you and wishes to be your home and your school of communion and prayer. Study the Word of God and let it enlighten your minds and hearts. Draw strength from the sacramental grace of Reconciliation and the Eucharist. Visit the Lord in that "heart to heart" contact that is Eucharistic Adoration. Day after day, you will receive new energy to help you to bring comfort to the suffering and peace to the world."

VI. Two other points

A. Before we bring this talk to its dramatic conclusion, I'd like to highlight two other pillars that are crucial for young people as you agonize to correspond to God's help for you to become holy. They are in a sense implicit in what John Paul II said above, but I want to make them explicit.

B. Our ordinary work

1. I mentioned above that JP II wrote, "The time has come to re-propose wholeheartedly to everyone this high standard of ordinary Christian living: the whole life of the Christian community and of Christian families must lead in this direction."
2. One of the largest canonizations in the history of the Church took place ten years ago last month, on October 6, 2002, when Pope John Paul II raised St. Josémaría Escrivá to the altars. St. Josémaría was a very controversial figure in the history of the Church. Back in 1928, he saw in prayer that the Lord was calling him to be his instrument to found Opus Dei, which was to call and help all people, in the midst of their ordinary activities, to become saints. It was controversial because, despite the fact that the Lord calls us several times in the Gospel to be holy as he is holy, to be perfected as he is perfect, to love like he loves, despite the fact that saints like St. Francis de Sales had talked forcefully about how ordinary people can and are called to be holy, at a practical level most of the leaders in the Church thought that God was calling only a few to be saints and the rest of us to be good.
3. At St. Josémaría's canonization, Pope John Paul II spoke about the universal call to holiness for which St. Josémaría was a chosen instrument. St. Josémaría suffered because many thought that he was a heretic saying that everyone, including cab drivers, housewives, farmers, nurses, even politicians, were called to become a saint in the midst of their ordinary activity, that all honest work was an opportunity to grow closer to God. Eventually his teachings were not only determined not to be heretical but became the central teaching of the Second Vatican Council, that all of us are called to be saints. At his canonization, John Paul II said that this teaching on holiness "is still timely and urgent today. In virtue of the Baptism that incorporates him into Christ, the believer is called to establish with the Lord an uninterrupted and vital relationship. He is called to be holy and to collaborate in the salvation of humanity. Believers acting in the various realities of this world contribute to realize this divine universal plan. Work and any other activity, carried out with the help of grace, is converted into a means of daily sanctification." He quoted St. Josémaría, who said: "The ordinary life of a Christian who has faith when he works or rests, when he prays or sleeps, at all times, is a life in which God is always present" and added, "This supernatural vision of life unfolds an extraordinarily rich horizon of salvific perspectives,

because, even in the only apparently monotonous flow of normal earthly events, God comes close to us and we can cooperate with his plan of salvation.”

4. Sanctify your work by consecrating it to God and doing it as well as you can out of love for him and others. Sanctify oneself in one's work, because the most important part of our work is not the transitive aspect of doing or making “something,” but the intransitive, subjective dimension of forming ourselves. (Gregory of Nyssa and moral theology). Sanctify others through your work, using the work site, or the school, or the sports field, or the supermarket, as an opportunity for apostolate, for friendship, for drawing people to Christ, first by witness but then sometimes by invitation. This isn't proselytism. We want to share with them the greatest gift we can.
5. Speaking to the crowd of more than a half-million people, and through them to the Church spread throughout the world, John Paul II said: “Following in his footsteps, spread in society the consciousness that we are all called to holiness whatever our race, class, society or age. In the first place, struggle to be saints yourselves, cultivating an evangelical style of humility and service, abandonment to Providence and of constant listening to the voice of the Spirit. In this way, you will be the *"salt of the earth"* (cf. Mt 5,13) and *"your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."*
6. The words that John Paul II said at that canonization were a clear expression of what John Paul II considered his biggest priority, because it's the Church's priority. It was to complete Jesus' fundamental mission and the Church's fundamental task: to call and help each of us become holy in the midst of our ordinary work and strengthen us so that we might become God's instruments to sanctify others.

C. Our chastity

1. Nowhere is our call to holiness more powerfully and succinctly expressed than in St. Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians, where he famously says, “This is the will of God, your sanctification.” But few really know what he says immediately thereafter, as an explication of the path to fulfill God's will for our holiness. St. Paul writes, “that you abstain from *porneia*” a Greek term that refers to all sexual sin and is generally translated as unchastity. In order to become a saint, we have to be chaste. This is because, as St. Paul says, holiness and impurity, sanctity and unchastity, are polar opposites. Holiness is simply the full flourishing of love in a human person and one cannot truly love unless one is chaste. Chastity is not just a counter-cultural Christian virtue, but something that is indispensable for us to become fully human, holy and eternally happy. That's why we need to know it and live it. That's why we need to help those we serve to know it and live it, too. Chastity is an essential part of the Church's mission for the salvation and sanctification of the human race.
2. We're living, however, in a time in which probably no part of Catholic faith and life is as caricatured, contradicted, criticized, condemned, calumniated and contravened as Catholic moral teaching on chastity. Many outside the Church, and even many inside, look at the Church's teaching as something as outdated as Victorian clothing, as the path to repression rather than love, as a school of freaks rather than saints. They charge it's against our biology, by shackling a natural urge. It's against our rational nature, by restraining our freedom. It's even against God's plans for us, by impeding the life of joy he intends. In short, they regard the Church as a naysaying, puritanical nag proclaiming Bad News instead of Good. Listening to all the criticism, one would expect that the path to happiness would be precisely by living contrary, rather than according, to what the Church teaches as God's wisdom. But how has that worked out? Has the culture that trumpets the right to sex with whomever we want, whenever we want, wherever we want, however we want brought us happiness? Or has it not contributed to the escalating problems of broken hearts, marriages and families, sexually transmitted diseases, sex crimes, violence and trafficking, prostitution and pornography, sexual addictions, teenage pregnancies and abortions?
3. Contrary to what many mistakenly believe, the Church's teaching on chastity is not a type of asbestos that we try to wrap around the most passionate of human experiences. Rather it's a wisdom that seeks to help those flames not destroy what God wants the sexual urge to lead to: real love, so that we might genuinely love others as Christ has loved us. Rather than negative and prudish, the Church couldn't have a more exalted appreciation for human love. But few really know it.
4. What's chastity? So many are confused about what it means. Chastity is regularly confused with continence (abstinence from sexual activity) or celibacy (the state of being unmarried). When the

Catechism emphasizes that “all Christ’s faithful are called to lead a chaste life in keeping with their particular states of life,” and that “married people are called to live conjugal chastity,” many married couples are left scratching their heads, wondering how they can be both “chaste” and start a family. The reason for the confusion likely stems from the fact that when the term “chastity” is most often used, it’s employed in the context of the sexual education of teenagers (who are called to continence in chastity) or in the description of the promises or vows professed by people like us (who are called to celibate continence in chastity). The confusion points to the urgency and importance for all in the Church to understand what chastity is and how all the baptized — married couples, singles, priests, consecrated, those with same-sex attractions and opposite-sex attractions — are called to it no matter what their state of life.

5. The first step in the Church’s teaching on chastity is found in the Catechism of the Catholic Church. The Catechism talks about chastity as a vocation, a gift from God, and a grace (2345) but at the same time it talks about it as the “fruit of spiritual effort” that includes the “apprenticeship in self-mastery” so that man “governs his passions and finds peace” rather than letting himself “be dominated by them” (2339). It’s linked fundamentally to the virtue of temperance or self-control (2341). This self-mastery leading toward self-control is a “long and exacting work,” it goes on to say. “One can never consider it acquired once and for all. It presupposes renewed effort at all stages of life.” But the end is a “successful integration of sexuality within the person and thus the inner unity of man in his bodily and spiritual being” (2337). Chastity, therefore, is a “school of the gift of the person that leads to a spiritual communion, which is at the basis of all friendship, not to mention other relationships (2347). Christ is the model of chastity (2394) and all the faithful are called to lead a chaste life in keeping with their particular states of life (2348).
6. But that look at chastity as the temperate integration of the sexual urge never struck Blessed Pope John Paul II as adequate. The sexual urge is meant, he wrote in various prepapal essays, to lead us ecstatically out of ourselves to communion with others and God, to recognize that we are not self-sufficient. Moderating the sexual urge is not enough; we need to orient it appropriately so that it actually brings about communion rather than destroys it. Chastity is not linked fundamentally to temperance, he wrote in his 1960 work, “Love and Responsibility,” but rather is linked to love. Chastity is the moral habit that raises one’s attractions to another to the dignity of that person as a whole. There is a temptation — which we see in lust in general and in pornography in particular — to “reduce” another to the values of the body or, more specifically, to the erogenous zones. There is, moreover, the further temptation to “use” another — either intentionally in one’s mind or physically through their body — for one’s own sensual or emotional gratification; many people in our culture consensually use each other sexually in this way. This mutual utilitarianism, however, is not love, but the opposite of love. Harmonious egoisms or reciprocal narcissisms don’t lead to the formation of a loving “we,” but just two even-more-isolated-egos. Love, rather, always seeks the true good of the other for the other’s sake. When a person loves genuinely, he is willing to sacrifice his pleasure or even his life for the one loved. Chastity makes this possible, because it is the virtue that trains a person’s vision as well as his will to keep his attraction to the other person up to the level of the person’s true good rather than “consume” the other to satisfy one’s sexual appetites.
7. In his papal catecheses on “Human Love in the Divine Plan,” popularly called the Theology of the Body, Pope John Paul II went even further in his teaching on chastity. He described that the virtue of chastity isn’t so much bound to the virtue of temperance as to the virtues of purity and piety. Purity is a virtue that impacts our vision. “Blessed are the pure of heart,” Jesus taught, “for they shall see God.” Purity allows us to see God in others, to recognize a reflection of the image of God, to see something of Love incarnate, of the divine giver. Piety is the habit that helps us, once we’ve remembered or recognized that they’re not a “mere mortal” to them others according to their true dignity, according to the image of God in them. St. Paul wrote to husbands and wives, “Be subordinate to each other out of reverence for Christ” (Eph 5:21, calling them to recognize and revere Christ in each other and mutually lay down their lives for each other out of love for the Lord they recognize dwelling in the other. Linked to piety, chastity helps us to see the other as sacred subject instead of a sexual object.
8. So we can say that chastity is connected to all four virtues — self-control, love, purity and piety. It’s what helps us keep our *eros* capable of *philia* and *agape*, to use the categories Pope Benedict uses in *Deus*

Caritas Est. Living chastely does not relegate others to a “loveless life,” but provides the conditions for the possibility of any true love through the integration of *eros* consistent with *philia* and *agape*. If we’re ever, however, going to learn how to love and help individuals learn how to love (*agape*) others as Christ has loved us and assist them to discover a love that saves and leads to true and lasting happiness, we need to rediscover and re-propose with enthusiasm the virtue of chastity, and help them to live it.

9. For some, the life of chastity may be one of the principal means by which they “agonize” to enter through the narrow gate, but it’s worth the effort. We have to make the effort.

VII. Conclusion

- A. I want to finish with some words that the man whom God has selected to guide the young to be ever young and ever holy said in Cologne, Germany, in 2005 to the youth of the world. He described that the young are meant to lead a revolution, a true revolution. It’s a fitting summary of my whole message today:
 1. God has given us examples [of] a long procession of men and women who have constantly tried to [go] in search of the God who has drawn close to us and shows us the way.
 2. 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.
 3. My venerable Predecessor Pope John Paul II, ... 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.
 4. 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".
 5. 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.
 6. 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.
 7. In the last century we experienced revolutions with a common programme - expecting nothing more from God, they assumed total responsibility for the cause of the world in order to change it. [Nazism, Communism.] 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.
 8. 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?
- B. St. Therese once said, “You cannot become half a saint. You must be a whole saint or no saint at all.” Today if we could hear her voice, if we could hear John Paul II’s voice, if we could hear the voices of all the saints who are at Jesus’ right side in glory, they would all say to us, “Go for it! Don’t be afraid to respond to the call to be a saint! Don’t be satisfied with an average Christian life! God who has called you to spiritual greatness, to be holy as he is holy, will give you all the help you need to become holy, just receive his grace and respond!”