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COMUNICATO DEL PONTIFICIO CONSIGLIO PER I LAICI

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The Holy Father has addressed a message to the youth of the world as they enter the last stage of preparation for the 20th World Youth Day that is scheduled to take place in Cologne next year (16-21 August 2005). The Message has been published one year in advance in order to be used in the pastoral preparation in the dioceses of the world. Pope John Paul II tells the young people: *"It is important for you not only to concern yourselves with the practical arrangements for World Youth Day, but first of all you must carefully prepare yourselves spiritually, in an atmosphere of faith and listening to the Word of God"*.

In this Message, the Holy Father develops the theme chosen for WYD in Cologne *"We have come to worship him"* (Mt 2:2), and points out in the introduction that this theme *"enables young people from every continent to follow in spirit the path taken by the Magi whose relics, according to a pious tradition, are venerated in this very city, and to meet, as they did, the Messiah of all nations"*. This explains why the Holy Father invites young people from all regions of the earth to also set out on this path to make the journey towards Cologne, and to discover the meaning of true adoration by imitating the interior attitude of the Magi.

Adoration is, first of all, the recognition on our part of the magnificence and beauty of the Mystery of the Incarnation. As we contemplate the child laid to rest by Mary his Mother in the stable in Bethlehem, and *"faithfully pursuing the path of our Redeemer from the poverty of the Crib to His abandonment on the Cross, we can better understand the mystery of His love which redeems humanity"*. This mystery of love continues for us each day in the sacrament of the Eucharist: *"In the stable at Bethlehem He allowed himself to be worshipped under the humble outward appearances of a newborn baby, by Mary, by Joseph and by the shepherds; in the consecrated Host we adore Him sacramentally present in his body, blood, soul and godhead, and He offers himself to us as the food of eternal life"*. The Holy Father specifies that, *"today we can also worship Him in the Eucharist, and acknowledge Him as our Creator, our only Lord and Saviour ... Be worshippers of the only true God, giving Him pride of place in your lives!"*

Pope John Paul II then urges young people to reject idolatry in all its forms in their lives: *"Idolatry is an ever-present temptation ... My dear young people, do not yield to false illusions and passing fads which so frequently leave behind a tragic spiritual vacuum! Reject the seduction of wealth, consumerism and the subtle violence*

sometimes used by the mass media. Worshipping the true God is an authentic act of resistance to all forms of idolatry".

The fact that the Magi took a different way home, the Holy Father writes, "*can symbolise the conversion to which all those who encounter Jesus are called, in order to become the true worshippers that He desires (cf Jn 4: 23-24)". He invites young people to respond generously to God's call and not to be afraid of making "courageous choices, to take what are sometimes heroic decisions", for it is God who "calls some to give up everything to follow Him in the priestly or consecrated life". He reminds us that the vocation of all the baptised is the call to holiness, and he emphasises the importance of witnessing.*

As they go deeper into the theme of adoration during this year of preparation for WYD in Cologne, the young people can have a more intensive experience of the Year of the Eucharist that Pope John Paul II has proclaimed for the whole Church (October 2004-2005).

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