

The Spirituality of World Youth Day

- Archbishop Adrian Smith sm, Archbishop of Honiara

MASS AND CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION IN SYDNEY:

Sunday 20th of July was the actual World Youth Day 2008 when Pope Benedict XVI confirmed an international group of young men and women at the 10 a.m. Mass at Randwick. For those young people who received the Sacrament of Confirmation from Pope Benedict XVI, it was their Pentecost. It was the moment when Jesus fulfilled his promise to them: "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witness" (Acts 1:8).



For the 350,000 people present at Randwick and the many millions who followed this great event on T.V. a reminder of what our Sacrament of Confirmation asks of us.

For days, weeks, months our youth in Solomon Islands prepared for this great event when in Sydney they would celebrate Mass with Pope Benedict. Starting 6th July groups made the exciting trip to Brisbane and from Brisbane to Lismore for Days in the Diocese. Amid all the excitement we tried to keep focused on the Spirituality of this great pilgrimage of Catholic Youth from all over the World to Sydney, Australia, where they heard Pope Benedict XVI speak to them on the importance of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

DAYS OF CATECHESIS:

DAY ONE: To help our youth to prepare for this great event we had three days of Catechesis at over 250 centres in Sydney. On Wednesday 16th July our youth reflected on: *Called to live in the Holy Spirit*. The important question we reflected on was: Who is the Holy Spirit? Through Baptism we are called to share in the life of God's Holy Spirit. Understanding our Christian call helps us to open our hearts to the power of God's Spirit in our lives. In our lives we are often influenced by the life stories of others. If we have been blessed by being influenced by the life stories of good people, it helps us to have good values in our own lives. It is, as it were, that we are touched by the Spirit of those good people. Our Catechesis was about opening our hearts to be touched in a very real way by the Spirit of Jesus. It was a clear call to encourage each one to welcome the Holy Spirit into our lives.

The Mass we celebrated following our Catechesis was the Mass of our Lady of Mount Carmel. It helped us to reflect in a meaningful way on the response of the Blessed Virgin Mary to the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit. By the power of the Holy Spirit Mary became the mother of Jesus. By that same power we can become witnesses of Jesus in 2008 and onwards.

DAY TWO: The second Catechesis, Thursday 17th July: *The Holy Spirit the soul of the Church*. When a person dies the soul leaves the body. The soul is the source of life. The Church, the community of those who believe in Jesus Christ is alive because the Holy Spirit is the soul of the Church. Jesus

lives in the Church through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, the soul of the Church, gives to the Church very many gifts. We all know the special *Seven Gifts* of the Holy Spirit given to us in our Sacrament of Confirmation. It is the fruits of the gifts of the Holy Spirit that makes the Church a community of peace, love, forgiveness, patience, healing and perseverance. It is our task to make sure that each one of us contributes to our Church community the fruit of the gifts offered to us in our Sacrament of Confirmation. Each Church member has to do his/her part in making the Church a living sign of Christ Jesus.

The Readings we heard during the Mass of our Second Day of Catechesis made it clear we are called to live the gifts of the Spirit in our Church life. 1 Cor. 12: 4-13, gave us a beautiful picture of the gifts offered to the Church Community, the Body of Christ. We are the Body of Christ made up of so many gifted persons all energized by the same Holy Spirit are the Church. Psalm 27 is a wonderful prayer of trust in God who is our protector. St. Peter's answer to Jesus question: 'Who do you say I am?' was an answer given to Peter by the Father in Heaven. The Spirit of God helped Peter to answer: 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God'. The keys promised by Jesus to Peter were not door keys, they were the gifts of the Holy Spirit that set men and women free to live in the truth. The Holy Spirit is clearly the soul of the Church.

DAY THREE: Friday July 18th: *Sent out into the world.*

This third day of Catechesis was directed towards help our youth to share with others the gifts of the Holy Spirit they received on their call to be members of the Church. We are not gifted by the Holy Spirit just for our own spiritual advantage. We are called to be missionaries of the gifts we have received. Holiness and Wholesomeness is the same thing. We are made whole by the Holy Spirit and we are called to be witnesses of that wholesomeness. Being sent out does not mean we have to go to another place to witness. It is not a question of where we go or what we do; it is **HOW** we live the gifts we have received. If we are wholesome Spirit filled people where we live, work, study, pray and relax we are missionaries of Christ values. Of course some are called to actually leave our present situation and to go out to those who do not yet know the name of Christ Jesus. For most of us our mission is right where we are now. How we live the values of Jesus is our way to share the Good News. Be holy – wholesome – persons and others will discover in your lifestyle the presence of Jesus. They will come to know Him.

The Mass of our third Catechesis was the Mass for the Evangelization of peoples. Once again St. Paul in 1 Cor. 9: 16-18 sets the tone of our call. I have no reason to boast, preaching the Gospel is my duty given to me by God. Here we find a very wholesome attitude as to how we should understand our mission as Confirmed Catholics. Psalm 93 challenges us: Listen to our God; don't turn away from Him. The Gospel story Mathew 28: 16 – 20 leaves us in no doubt as to what Jesus expects from his disciples. On Ascension Thursday, before he was taken up into Heaven, Jesus clearly told his disciples: 'Go everywhere and make all nations my disciples'. Now our two thousand years later Jesus has the same message for us. Every time we attend Mass we receive the same mission: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. In our village communities we call the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, the **Misa**. That name comes from times when at the end of Mass the priest used to say: *Ite Missa est* – go, now is the sending – the people understood they were being sent home to live what they had celebrated.

Pope Benedict XVI had the same message for us all in Sydney. Be living witnesses of the message of the Holy Spirit.