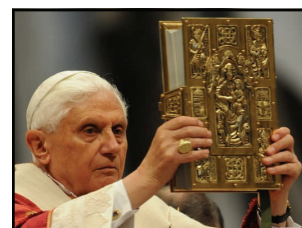


Pope Benedict XVI's Vision for Leadership in Catechesis



“AD LIMINA” ADDRESS TO BISHOPS OF JAPAN *Your Leadership Provides Hope to Society*

This is an excerpt of the “Ad Limina” address given by Pope Benedict on July 7, 2007 when the Bishops of Japan made their Ad Limina visit to Rome..



Dear Brother Bishops,

I am pleased to welcome you on your ad Limina visit, as you come to venerate the tombs of the Apostles Peter and Paul... I offer you my warmest good wishes and prayers for yourselves and all the people entrusted to your pastoral care..

Last year the Church celebrated with great joy the five hundredth anniversary of the birth of Saint Francis Xavier, Apostle of Japan. I join you in giving thanks to God for the missionary work that he carried out in your land, and for the seeds of Christian faith that he planted at the time of Japan's first evangelization. **The need to proclaim Christ boldly and courageously is a continuing priority for the Church;** indeed it is a solemn duty laid upon her by Christ who enjoined the Apostles to “go out to the whole world, proclaim the Good News to all creation” (Mk 16:16). Your task today is to seek new ways of bringing alive the message of Christ in the cultural setting of modern Japan. . Even though Christians form only a small percentage of the population, the faith is a treasure that needs to be shared with the whole of Japanese society. Your leadership in this area needs to inspire clergy and religious, catechists, teachers, and families to offer an explanation for the hope that they possess (cf. 1 Pet 3:15). **This in turn requires sound catechesis, based on the teachings of the Catechism of the Catholic Church and the Compendium.** Let the light of the faith so shine before others, that “they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven” (Mt 5:16).

Indeed the world is hungry for the message of hope that the Gospel brings. Even in countries as highly developed as yours, many are discovering that economic success and advanced technology are not sufficient in themselves to bring fulfillment to the human heart. Anyone who does not know God “is ultimately without hope, without the great hope that sustains the whole of life” (*Spe Salvi*, 27). **Remind people that there is more to life than professional success and profit.** Through the practice of charity, in the family and in the community, they can be led towards “that encounter with God in Christ which awakens their love and opens their spirits to others” (*Deus Caritas Est*, 31)..

Young people especially are at risk of being deceived by the glamour of modern secular culture. Yet, like all the greater and lesser hopes that appear on first sight to promise so much (cf. *Spe Salvi*, 30), this turns out to be a false hope – and tragically, disillusion not infrequently leads to depression and despair, even to suicide. **If their youthful energy and enthusiasm can be directed towards the things of God, which alone are sufficient to satisfy their deepest longings, more young people will be inspired to commit their lives to Christ,** and some will recognize a call to serve him in the priesthood or the religious life. Invite them to consider whether this may be their vocation. Never be afraid to do so. Encourage your priests and religious likewise to be active in promoting vocations, and lead your people in prayer, asking the Lord to “send out laborers into his harvest” (Mt 9:38).