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John Paul II welcomed by 700,000 young people in Madrid

"I continue to believe in you," said the Pope to more than 700,000 young people in a meeting on May 3 in Madrid. "You are the hope of the Church, no less than of society."

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On May 3 at 5:30 at the apostolic nunciature in Madrid, Pope John Paul held a private meeting with Jose

Maria Aznar, president of the Spanish government, and his wife and family. Following the meeting the Holy Father travelled by popemobile to the Quatros Vientos Airport, 30 kilometers from Madrid, for a meeting with Spain's young people.

The theme of today's vigil was "You will be my witnesses." Four young people meditated on each of the four groups of mysteries of the Rosary - Joyful, Luminous, Sorrowful and Glorious - and read from the Gospels of Luke and John. At the end of this meditation John Paul II addressed an estimated 700,000 young people.

The Pope told the cheering youths that he was "deeply moved by your warm and cordial welcome." He said he wanted to repeat what he told young people more than 20 years earlier on his first visit to Spain: "You are the hope of the Church, no less

than of society. ... I continue to believe in young people, in you."

"Your lives," he went on, "must shine with the grace of God, the same that shone in Mary, full of grace. You wished tonight to meditate on the mysteries of the Rosary, putting into practice the ancient maxim: 'To Jesus through Mary'. ... Mary, in addition to being a Mother who is close, discreet and understanding, is the best teacher for reaching truth through contemplation. The drama of current culture is a lack of interior life, the absence of contemplation. Without interior life culture has no content, it is like a body that has not yet found its soul."

The Pope urged his young audience "never to separate action from contemplation; thus you will contribute to transforming a great dream into a reality; the birth of the new Europe in the spirit. A Europe

faithful to its Christian roots, not closed in on itself, but open to dialogue and collaboration with other peoples of the earth."

"Beloved young people, you know well how concerned I am for peace in the world. The spiral of violence, terrorism and war provokes, even in our days, hatred and death. Peace, we know, is first of all a gift from On High that we must for ask insistently and that we must all build together through a deep inner conversion. Thus, today I ask you to be workers and builders of peace. Answer blind violence and inhuman hatred with the fascinating power of love. Conquer enmity with the strength of pardon. Stay away from every form of exasperated nationalism, racism and intolerance. Witness with your lives to the fact that ideas are not imposed, but are proposed. Don't ever be discouraged by evil! For this you need the help of prayer and the

consolation that comes from an intimate friendship with Christ. Only in this way, living the experience of God's love and radiating Gospel fraternity, can you be builders of a better world, authentic men and women of peace and peacemakers."

Before reciting a concluding prayer, John Paul II counselled the youths to "become apostles of your peers. I know well that this is not easy. ... Don't lose hope because you are not alone: the Lord will never cease accompanying you, with His grace and with the gift of His Spirit."

Vatican Information Service