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MESSAGGIO DEL SANTO PADRE IN OCCASIONE DELL'APERTURA DEL CONGRESSO DEI LAICI CATTOLICI DELL'ASIA (SEOUL, COREA DEL SUD, 31 AGOSTO-5 SETTEMBRE 2010)

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Dal 31 agosto al 5 settembre 2010 si svolge presso la Cattedrale di Seoul (Corea del Sud), un Congresso per i laici cattolici in Asia, promosso dal Pontificio Consiglio per i Laici, con la collaborazione della Commissione per il Laicato della Conferenza episcopale coreana e il locale Consiglio nazionale dei laici, sul tema: "*Proclamare Gesù Cristo nell'Asia di oggi*".

Pubblichiamo di seguito il Messaggio che il Santo Padre Benedetto XVI ha inviato al Presidente del Pontificio Consiglio per i Laici, l'Em.mo Card. Stanisław Ryłko, in occasione dell'apertura dei lavori del Congresso:

• MESSAGGIO DEL SANTO PADRE

To my Venerable Brother
Cardinal Stanisław Ryłko
President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity

I was pleased to learn that the Congress of Asian Catholic Laity will be held in Seoul from 31 August to 5 September 2010. I ask you kindly to convey my cordial greetings and prayerful good wishes to the Bishops, priests, religious and lay faithful from Asia assembled for this significant pastoral initiative promoted by the Pontifical Council for the Laity. The theme chosen for the Congress – *Proclaiming Jesus Christ in Asia Today* – is most timely, and I am confident that it will encourage and guide the lay faithful of the continent in bearing joyful witness to the Risen Lord and to the life-giving truth of his holy word.

Asia, home to two-thirds of the world's people, the cradle of great religions and spiritual traditions, and the birthplace of diverse cultures, is currently undergoing unprecedented processes of economic growth and social transformation. Asia's Catholics are called to be a sign and promise of that unity and communion – communion with God and among men – which the whole human family is meant to enjoy and which Christ alone makes possible. As part of the mosaic of the continent's different peoples, cultures and religions, they have been entrusted with a great mission: that of bearing witness to Jesus Christ, the universal Savior of mankind. This is the supreme service and the greatest gift that the Church can offer to the people of Asia, and it is my hope that

the present Conference will provide renewed encouragement and direction in taking up this sacred mandate.

"The peoples of Asia need Jesus Christ and his Gospel. Asia is thirsting for the living water that Jesus alone can give" (*Ecclesia in Asia*, 50). These prophetic words of the Servant of God John Paul II still resound as a summons addressed to each member of the Church in Asia. If the lay faithful are to take up this mission, they need to become ever more conscious of the grace of their Baptism and the dignity which is theirs as sons and daughters of God the Father, sharers in the death and resurrection of Jesus his Son, and anointed by the Holy Spirit as members of Christ's mystical Body which is the Church. In union of mind and heart with their Pastors, and accompanied at every step of their journey of faith by a sound spiritual and catechetical formation, they need to be encouraged to cooperate actively not only in building up their local Christian communities but also in making new pathways for the Gospel in every sector of society. Vast horizons of mission are now opening up before the lay men and women of Asia in their efforts to bear witness to the truth of the Gospel; I think especially of the opportunities offered by their example of Christian married love and family life, their defense of God's gift of life from conception to natural death, their loving concern for the poor and the oppressed, their willingness to forgive their enemies and persecutors, their example of justice, truthfulness and solidarity in the workplace, and their presence in public life.

The increasing numbers of committed, trained and enthusiastic lay persons is thus a sign of immense hope for the future of the Church in Asia. Here I wish to single out with gratitude the outstanding work of the many catechists who bring the riches of the Catholic faith to young and old alike, drawing individuals, families and parish communities to an ever deeper encounter with the Risen Lord. The apostolic and charismatic movements are also a special gift of the Spirit, since they bring new life and vigor to the formation of the laity, particularly families and young people. The associations and ecclesial movements devoted to the promotion of human dignity and justice concretely demonstrate the universality of the Gospel message of our adoption as children of God. Along with the many individuals and groups committed to prayer and works of charity, as well as the contribution made by pastoral and parish councils, these groups play an important role in helping the particular Churches of Asia to be built up in faith and love, strengthened in communion with the universal Church and renewed in zeal for the spread of the Gospel.

For this reason, I pray that the present Congress will highlight the indispensable role of the lay faithful in the Church's mission and develop specific programs and initiatives to assist them in their task of proclaiming Jesus Christ in Asia today. I am confident that the deliberations of the Congress will stress that the Christian life and calling must be seen first and foremost as a source of sublime happiness and a gift to be shared with others. Every Catholic should be able to say, with the Apostle Paul, "For me, to live is Christ" (*Phil* 1:21). Those who have found in Jesus the truth, joy and beauty which give meaning and direction to their lives will naturally desire to bring this grace to others. Undaunted by the presence of difficulties, or the enormity of the task at hand, they will trust in the mysterious presence of the Holy Spirit who is always at work in the hearts of individuals, in their traditions and cultures, mysteriously opening doors to Christ as "the way, and the truth and the life" (*Jn* 14:6), and the fulfilment of every human aspiration.

With these sentiments, I invoke upon all taking part in the Congress a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit and I willingly join in the prayer which will accompany these days of study and discernment. May the Church in Asia bear ever more fervent witness to the incomparable beauty of being a Christian, and proclaim Jesus Christ as the one Savior of the world. Commending those present to the loving intercession of Mary, Mother of the Church, I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing as a pledge of joy and peace in the Lord.

From the Vatican, 10 August 2010

BENEDICTUS PP. XVI

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