





"THERE IS SOMETHING MORE!
Let's grow up together!"

This was the motto for the meeting of 10,000 children and young people from Catholic Action, who had a chance to meet with Pope Benedict XVI. He challenged them, "**Have the courage not to deprive any environment of Jesus.**" A high point was the Q&A session with him, which covered quite deep topics, such as the true meaning of love. Below are some of the Pope's answers.

We are often told that to become adults, we have to learn how to love, but often we fail and suffer in our relationships, in our friendships, and in our first loves. What does it mean to love in a total way? How can we learn to truly love?

(...) If you are able to make your life a gift to others, not to seek yourselves, but to give yourselves to others, then you are learning at the school of love. **Loving in this way will give you that "something more"** that today you shout to everyone. "There's something more to life!"

As I have already said, I too, in my youth wanted something more than what society and the mentality of the time was offering. **I wanted a beautiful and good world**, like our God, the Father of Jesus, wanted for everyone. And I understood more and more that the world becomes beautiful and good if it lives in accordance with the will of God, which is the light, beauty and love that gives the world meaning.

This is so true! **You cannot and must not adapt yourselves to a love reduced to a commodity** to be consumed without respect for oneself or for others. This is not freedom. Most of the "love" that is proposed by the media or on the internet is not love, but self-centeredness. It gives you a nice daydream for a moment, but it doesn't make you happy (...).

Of course it demands sacrifice to live out true love – without giving up things one doesn't find the way - but I'm certain that you aren't afraid of the effort required by authentic love that involves a commitment. **It is the only kind of love that ultimately gives true joy!**

There is a way you can tell whether your love is growing in a healthy way. If you **don't exclude others** from your life, especially all your friends who are suffering and alone or people who have difficulties, and if you open your heart to your great Friend, Jesus, then your love will grow. (...)

Aim at big goals, because God gives you the strength to reach them. "More" means to be young people and children who have decided to love others as Jesus did, to take a leading role in your own lives, and to be leaders in the Church and witnesses of the faith to your peers.



Doing the will of God – that's how we become saints!! This was the great discovery Chiara made. She found an entrance ticket for crowds of people to become holy! She and her first companions were full of joy at the thought that they could offer this ticket to old and young men and women, manual workers and professors.

do we train ourselves?

If I knew that I had to do penance, (...) I would do it from morning to night. If I knew that I had to pray, I would pray night and day. If it were enough to preach to others, I would go through all the cities and towns, without resting, to teach everyone about the word of God (...), but the truth is that I don't know the way.

Every saint has his or her own personality, and they are as different from each other as the flowers in a garden. (...) But **maybe there is a way that is open for everyone!** Maybe we don't have to each find our own way, we don't have to trace out a pattern of our own or dream up some plan, but rather live fully each moment

that passes, fulfilling the will of the Person who said, "I am the Way."

The moment that just passed doesn't exist anymore and the one to come might never be in our possession. **We can love God in the present moment that is given to us!**

No one knows their own holiness or even the holiness of others, as long as we are alive. Only when the person has completed their race, and passed the test, do we see the plan that God had for his or her life.

The only thing that we have to do is to work on our sanctity moment by moment, responding to the love of God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. **His love is personal and total**, since he is our heavenly Father, and the extent of his love is immense, because he *is* God.

Chiara

People are often attracted by the idea of sanctity. Maybe it is actually the grace of God at work, stirring up such a desire in them. But at times we can feel like there is a **huge chasm** separating us from sanctity, or an enormous wall that we can't get over.

What can we do to become a saint? What is the way, **what technique do we have to use**, what's the measure, how





I DIDN'T LIKE TO STUDY

Dori was one of Chiara's first companions. She met her when she was only 16 years old. She told the Gen 3 about how Chiara helped her discover the love of God and how to respond to his great love for us.



One day one of my teachers invited me to attend a conference. I didn't like going to these conferences, because they were very boring, and so I didn't go. Then I saw this teacher again and he told me: "You know, that conference was very beautiful; too bad you didn't come. A young woman spoke to us, and it was really very nice." And he went on: "Would you like to meet her? I'll give you her address so you can go and visit her." Really, I didn't really like church things because the women who gave the retreats were usually very pious and always asked me if I was being good, if I was doing my schoolwork and other questions that annoyed me, so I didn't want to meet this one either.

Then one day I received a beautiful card! It was this woman who had written to me, saying: "I'm waiting for you to come and see me, I'm home every afternoon." And she added: "I have something beautiful to tell you." I said to myself: "I wonder what could be so beautiful?" So I said to myself: "I'll go and find out who this person is and what she has to tell me." So, since I liked beautiful things and beautiful stories, I went. Who did I find? Chiara!

She welcomed me with such love and took me to her room and asked my name, what I was doing, if I went to school and so many other things... At a certain point she began to tell me in such a beautiful way that God is Love, that he loves us immensely, that he loved me immensely.

I had never heard anything like that before, because when other people spoke to me about God they said you had to obey the Ten Commandments, and if you weren't good, God would punish you. We would end up in hell if we were bad, or in heaven if we were always good. I pictured God as a judge who stood there watching us to see if we were being good or bad. Yes, I often asked him to help me succeed at school and make me good, but I didn't have a very good relationship with him.

But when Chiara spoke to me, she explained it in a way that sounded like this God-Love was like a daddy who loved me, who supported me, enlightened me, who made me understand things, who didn't demand difficult things of me, but always simple things, related to my needs, fulfilling my dreams. I had many dreams and I wanted beautiful things in life. I loved the stories of heroines who always overcame every difficulty, and were surrounded by people who loved them. Chiara explained to me that God is Love and he loves me personally, and this struck me so much that I felt I had received a great treasure. I ran all the way home and if anyone had stopped me, whether I knew them or not, I would have shouted: "I've found it!" I didn't know what it was, but I had found everything I desired. I realized that Chiara hadn't explained it; she gave it to me and put it in my heart. And you know how Chiara is - when she tells you something, she puts it inside you, so you can find it in your heart. It's not just words; it's the reality itself.



I was so happy! It seemed to me that this God-Love had created everything for me, that he made the flowers for me, the gentle breeze for me, the moon and the stars at night, all the beautiful things I saw in the world were there for me because he loved me, because he wanted me to be happy. (...)

You know that there was a war going on at that time. The sirens went off during the day telling us that planes were coming over the city to drop bombs. And I remember after I heard Chiara speak of God-Love that, every time I heard the siren -- which before that made me very scared because we all had to run fast to the shelters -- God seemed to be telling me: "Go safely, I will protect you." So I went and felt secure. The others ran in desperation; I went quickly but with a calm heart.

One day there was a terrible bombardment and bombs fell right over the house where I was. I was down in the cellar with many other people from the neighborhood. There was also a priest praying out loud. I picked up a child because his mother was so scared, and tried to calm him down and I thought, "I have to love this child as I know God loves me," because I felt God was like a strong hand supporting me, like our father supporting and carrying me. I felt just like I was in the arms of the Father. (...)

One day Chiara explained to me what was meant by the will of God. She said, "Now you have understood that God is love and he loves you. But what can you do to respond to this love of God?" I didn't know how to answer. She continued: "You have to love him." So I began to say to him during the day: "I love you, I trust you." When I had a hard time in school or at home, I would say: "Please help me!" I only wanted to do what he wanted.

At that time I was going to school. When I met Chiara she told me that she was giving private lessons at her home to a lot of people, because she was very good, very intelligent and very capable. I told her that since I hadn't studied much, I had failed a year in school and had to repeat that year. When she heard that, Chiara suggested, "Don't you want to make up for the year that you lost? I can tutor you in all the subjects and we can cover two years in one. When you finish, you can take the exams and graduate."

I was really happy because since it was Chiara telling me this, I saw it as something possible. I thought, "God is Love and I want to do what he wants of me, so I'll do this too." His love had spurred me on to do everything.

But there was only one problem. Up until then I liked being at school with my friends, talking together, playing, making up stories, reading books, but I didn't really like doing the work, and in certain subjects I was a mess, especially in Latin.

One day Chiara told me to translate from Italian to Latin. I did it, because I always did what she asked me. But when she returned my notebook I saw more red marks than black! It was full of corrections and looked like I had everything wrong. Really, I was used to that, because that's the way it was with me. Then on another page of the notebook, Chiara had written, "As you can see, you didn't do well. If you don't study, I can't promise you'll pass the exam. I promised your parents that I would help you study (in my life, many teachers had told me I wasn't working hard enough) but," Chiara continued, "if you don't study, you're not doing the will of God, and if you don't do the will of God, then you don't love God."



Opening our Treasure Chest

This was tragic, because I had just discovered that God is Love and that I can love this almighty Father, and now Chiara was telling me that to love God, I had to study Latin! I didn't expect to hear that; it was really bad! But since I wanted to embark on this adventure, I began to study. (...)

And so I started to do my homework. But about fifteen minutes later, I felt like eating an apple, but I told myself, "No, I have to study!" I put a little card near my notebook and drew a little cross on it. Soon I was thinking, "Now I'd like to go look out the window and see the people passing by. No! I have to study," and I would make another little cross. Then I went on and said: "Maybe I could read the newspaper for a while..." And immediately: "No, I have to study." At the end, I had made many, many little crosses. I added them up but then I said: "Jesus, you keep count. It's too much for me to deal with!"

And so out of love for Jesus, and out of love for a lot of people to get them to heaven, I learned to study, and began to get results. And we know that Chiara lived the whole Gospel, also where it says: "Love your neighbor as yourself." She loved me like that and do you know what happened? I got the same grade on the exam as she did, which was very high!

Chiara often said to me, "Do you know what the will of God is like? It's like a ray that comes from heaven, from God, reaching down to enlighten us. If that person does what they should, whatever is the personal will of God for them (for me it was to study), when it is done, it is like a ray that returns to God and remains forever in heaven. When this person gets to heaven she will find many beautiful things, more beautiful than what she had done."



SCHOOL Desks, homework, classmates, journal, teachers, grades, quizzes, tests, recess, books, bells, friends, interesting subjects, others less interesting...

OPERATION RIIING!!



What comes to *your* mind when you hear the word, “school?” Not just a word, but thousands of situations, moments, relationships... it’s a whole world, *our* world. It’s where we are every day, a big part of the day.

And so, in the year that we are trying to live the Will of God better, the world of school won a new column in the Gen 3 magazine! The title, RIIING, was chosen during the last meeting of the Gen Rainbow units, when right before leaving, we promised each other that whenever the school bell rings, at the beginning and end of class, it would be calling us to be saints!!



It would remind us to continue or to start again to live with more energy our Yes to God and to his Will especially at school. By living this way, we will also feel more united, beyond classrooms, buildings, cities and countries. Who knows how it’s been going for all of you and how many experiences you have!! We can’t wait to hear from you!

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NEWS

From the Philippines

180 teenagers participated in the Youth Camp at Maripolis Pace in Tagaytay. One of the boys, Michael, had a very deep experience. “After the big typhoon that hit our country, I couldn’t find the meaning of life anymore, because my whole family had died in it. But here, today, I experienced the love of God for me. He

shed light even on this tragedy, and now I have met all of you, my new family!” He also spoke from the stage and told the whole audience: “Take advantage of every chance to say ‘I love you’ to your mom and dad, and sisters and brothers, because when God calls them, you won’t be able to say it anymore.”



Giving without measure

Last October 31st, one of us, Christopher Amaya, 17 years old from Panama, was walking on the street when a guy who wanted to steal his cell phone, attacked and seriously wounded him. Christopher managed to drag himself home, but then he died on the way to the hospital.

Christopher met Teens for Unity at school, when he was 11 years old, after being invited to participate in the "Giving Club." He immediately took the challenge to go against the current, becoming a leader in the Club because of his commitment to live the Gospel and his passion for spreading the culture of giving to all those around him.

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At home, for example, he showed his mom so much love that she came back to church. She herself told us that her son Christopher was the focal point for her and his dad, even after their separation.

One of his messages posted on the Teens4Unity website a year ago says a lot: "This week I felt very down because I wasn't able to organize my life so that I'd have time for oth-

ers. So I decided to spend my weekends teaching English and math to the children in the lower grades.

Not wanting to be alone in this project, I invited other boys to join me (...), but they didn't like the neighborhood where the afterschool program was held. I offered the suffering of this rejection to Jesus and I asked Mary, his mother, to help me make the best of my time. The big day arrived and thinking that none of my friends were coming with me, I even arrived late for the scheduled appointment. To my surprise and joy, others had come, too! Some of them didn't know English or math very well...but they wanted to give whatever they could. At the end of the day, many came to tell me that they could see a ray of light in me! Mary was really holding me, her son, by the hand! "So that all may be one!" We could write so much about Christopher's readiness to help others, always with a smile.



NEWS

From the World Center of Teens4Unity

Where can we start to build a more united world? From our schools! That's where we have opportunities every day to build unity

among our classmates, with our teachers and with all the employees at our school. HOW? Chiara once told us, "To make new cities and a new world, it's not enough to have techni-



cians, scientists, politicians – what's needed are people who are wise, what's needed are saints!" And we know how true this is,

especially after being at the Beatification of Chiara Luce! So let's not be afraid, we aren't alone! Let's get down to work and build a united world in our classes and our schools.



Link

The Giving Club was started by the Teens4Unity in Panama. To be part of it, you have to live the “culture of giving” and you get a membership card when you share with others something of your own you really like a lot. The idea of a Giving Club spread quickly around the world. One of the most recent to form is in Sicily, Italy. It’s members are Francesca, Noemi, Asya, Maria and Giulia.

“We are starting with five of us, but we’re sure that the idea will spread all over our city. We want to help those in need and organize a Christmas Party at a nursing home.”

In the years since the Giving Club started, many projects like that have begun, and adults, too, got involved, generously giving their time and talents. In 2005 the Teens4Unity of Panama presented the Giving Club to the Minister of Education who then included it in the curriculum for all the public schools.

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This smile never left him, and even during his last moments when he realized he was dying, he tried to comfort his mother. The national newspaper spoke of him as having a special quality, “The gift of being a true human being.”

The Minister of Public Education, Lucy Molinar, presented him as a model for teens. Then something unusual happened: the journalists who usually cover crimes in a sensational way wrote that Christopher was someone who *loved* others, and that his death was a call to non-violence. The press and TV gave ample coverage to the rally organized by his friends and classmates with the message, “Stop the violence!” Christopher leaves behind a trail of concrete love. He shows us that a culture that fosters “having” instead of “giving” pushes people to act violently to get what they want. He paid with his life to give witness to a new culture, the Culture of Giving. Now he hands the staff on to us to continue the race, and all the many children and young people who attended his funeral, all those who had been touched by his love, have taken up the challenge!

NEWS

From Sao Paulo, Brazil

What could it be? It was called an “explosion of harmony, creativity, love - a piece of heaven on earth!” It was a Festival of dances, theater, poetry, raps and songs which brought together 384 participants from all over Sao Paulo. One girl wrote: “I was very far from God, but here I re-found the way and the will to live a full life. I want to live every day of my life as if it were my

last.” Another teenager said, “I understood that God is fantastic!” And another: “I discovered real love that brings you happiness.” And another: “These days have proven to me that God exists and that his Love is in my life. I’m leaving full of this true love.” This is the 4th year that the Festival has been held, and with these fruits, we feel like saying, “Long live the Festival!”



WHAT IS ADVERTISING?

By Anna Lisa Innocenti

Advertising is a form of communication, which is either paid or free, and reaches hundreds of thousands of people through the media – TV, radio, newspapers, billboards, internet – and tries to **influence them to buy a certain product or service**, or to follow a certain fad, or support a certain organization. It aims at influencing the attitudes and habits and choices of the consumer.

Advertising is used to sell products or to make people aware of problems that regard the whole community – for example, the dangers of smoking or the need for health insurance. Ads can also be used by the government or by politicians to make people aware of their rights and duties, or of general problems – like road safety or bullying in schools.

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How is it developed?

Advertising communicates a message and every detail is carefully thought out so that it will make an impact. Those who want to sell a product make a study of the population to see how to reach those they want to sell something to. They don't only describe their product, but they try to influence the choices of the consumer and **sometimes even change their lifestyle**.



Since there's a lot of research and professional ability that goes into making an ad, the result is often a powerful impact on our mentality and even on our behavior. Sometimes, in order to get us to buy something, **they create a need in us, or make us desire that thing, so that we feel we really need it, even though in reality we could easily do without it.**

Sometimes, especially with social values, ads can promote a healthy lifestyle, or encourage generosity, or support safeguarding the environment. So advertising is not just something negative and bad, but even in advertising a product, it can have a positive effect if done well.

Everything depends on how it is used and for what purpose. It can be a way of informing us about products and services; it can help the consumer make choices; it can have beneficial effects on business, and so on.



From India

In the town of Udisha, Schoolmates sponsors an after-school tutoring program, but this year the program ran into problems because some of the teachers couldn't keep up the commitment. "It seemed like our project couldn't continue! Then just as we thought we had to give up, a very important Jesuit university started a project to encourage a sense of responsibility in their students by getting them involved concretely in the needs of the community. So all of a sudden we had 10 university students who came to teach us!

Active and responsible consumers

To understand what is the objective behind a certain ad, we have to stop and analyze it and ask ourselves:

What is the purpose of this ad? (to sell a product, create a need, to inform people while respecting them, to make known a service...)

What message does it want to communicate to us?

What behavior does it want to change?

What values is it spreading?

Advertising is a form of communication and it only works if there is a give and take – the person who advertises needs our response to see if their message is getting through. Therefore, **we have a lot of power!** If we allow ourselves to be conditioned without reacting, the one who created the ad thinks they are on the right path. If instead we give negative feedback or constructive criticism, we will send the message that we do not like that style of advertising. **We will be the ones to influence *their* behavior, instead of vice versa!**

Reacting

And so if we want advertising to be a form of dialogue, we have to learn how to react! What's important is that we just don't say, "What an ugly ad!" and then do nothing about it. If we realize that certain messages are trying to convince us to buy something we shouldn't or promoting the culture of having, or don't respect the human person, or don't help us to live as a family, then we can decide not to buy that product. Then when sales decrease, it will be a sign to the owners that something is not right.

We can even do something more. We can write to the company or business that is advertising and give them our opinion, explain our position, offer alternative solutions. Or we can go to a public agency that is designed to put pressure on large companies that don't comply to certain standards.



what can we do?

Sometimes I really feel a pain in my heart when I see a bad ad. For example they might be advertising a new car on TV and yet they show an image that doesn't have anything to do with the car. It only serves to shock the public and in this way the name of that car sticks in your mind.

At times I'd like to start a campaign encouraging people to say, "We won't buy this car, we'll **boycott it**, because it is using this kind of advertising!"

Since publicity serves to make sales, if sales go down, they will have to find new ways of advertising. Many times there are ads that are very nice and you still remember the product they are talking about. So if these companies are convinced that they will sell more if they are honest (because it's dishonest to shock people with images that have nothing to do with their product), it would already have an effect.

Turning off the TV is one way to protest, but what about all the people who keep watching? We have to do something about it!

Let's get some ideas!

Emmas

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Special Christmas presents!

From Nigeria

My older brother spent Christmas vacation in another city and before he left, he gave me a gift of 1000 naira (which is equivalent to about \$8 but in Nigeria that can buy a lot!). I was really happy about that gift because my mom had also gone on a trip to another village without leaving any Christmas presents for us. **I decided to use that money to buy some books and also my school uniform**, but then on Christmas Day I got another idea! I was at Mass with my younger sister and I realized she was getting so distracted looking at all the nice new clothes the other children had. I asked Jesus in my heart to **help me do what I knew I should do** – to use that money to surprise my little sister with a gift. So I went and bought her a dress and a pair of sandals. A few days after Christmas a family friend came to see us and he brought a Christmas present for me – it was 1000 naira! I was so happy! I saw with my own eyes that the Gospel is true when it says, “Give and you shall receive!” So I was able to buy the

things I needed for school.

Amuche, Nigeria



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Our giving opens the hands of God

Have you ever received a gift from a friend and you feel that you want to reciprocate? **Not just out of duty, but because, out of love, you are grateful.** Certainly the answer is yes.

If this happens to you, you can imagine what God who is Love feels towards us. He always reciprocates every gift that we give to others in his name.

It happens so often and yet every time it's a surprise! **Have you ever had that experience?**

If not, remember that the gift has to be given *without expecting anything in return*, and to everyone who asks you. Try it – **but not to see what happens, but only because you love God.**