

Letter addressed to His Holiness, Pope Benedict XVI,  
on behalf of the participants of the Congress of Asian Catholic Laity

Your Holiness,

The Congress of Asian Catholic Laity, organized by the Pontifical Council of the Laity, now draws to a close. From August 30 to September 5 we have been guests here in Seoul of the Catholic Church in Korea and they have made us feel quite at home. Tomorrow, as we celebrate the Holy Eucharist, presided over by His Eminence, Cardinal Nicholas Cheong Jinsuk, in the Archbishop of Seoul's Cathedral, we give thanks to God for the many blessings and the renewed apostolic zeal that he has lavished upon us by means of Congress. This ecclesial event has instilled in all of us - bishops, priests, religious, and lay faithful from nearly every country of Asia, together with the representatives from the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences and representatives of associations, ecclesial movement and new communities- that particular grace of strengthening and deepening our awareness of being sons and daughters, disciples, witnesses and missionaries of the Lord in this immense and challenging continent.

We have certainly felt accompanied and sustained by the Universal Church, and above all, by Your Holiness. We have been touched by your paternal affection and closeness, expressed in the words of encouragement and guidance that you addressed to us in your letter to Cardinal Stanisław Ryłko in occasion of the opening of this Congress. We thank you for this initiative of your Pontifical Council for the Laity, which we consider a tangible sign of the universal ministry and untiring missionary care of the Successor of Peter.

During these days of reflection, a recurring theme has been that of the need to for the lay faithful in Asia to become "more conscious of their Baptism and the dignity which is theirs as sons and daughters of God the Father" and "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" (*taken from the Holy Father's message to Card. Ryłko*). The testimony of many Congress participants has shown how this awareness of the mission of the laity has matured in recent years and makes us more determined in helping all of the baptized to grow in their vocation as disciples of Christ and in their sense of belonging to the Universal Church. We are quite mindful of our unique contribution in building up the Christian community, of our vocation to charity for the good of all of our brothers and sisters throughout Asia. While immersed in a society that is undergoing deep seated transformation, we want to collaborate all the more in establishing conditions of life that are much more

dignified for all aspects of the person and for every person. All of us as baptized Christians are called to a renewed encounter with Jesus Christ the Lord that converts our life towards the path to holiness.

Dear Holy Father,

We are your “little flock”, a flock that can at times appear so small and inadequate before this vast continent with its billions of inhabitants and its ancient cultural and religious traditions, which stand in contrast to its new chaotic economic growth and rapid social changes that places Asia ever more on the forefront with a greater role to play on the global stage. Although we might be a little flock, we are able to affirm each day and firsthand that “the peoples of Asia need Jesus Christ and his Gospel” and that this continent “thirsts for the living water that only He can give” (*Ecclesia in Asia*, 50). Because of this, we are well aware of the need for each and everyone of us, as Catholic Laity, and as Your Holiness has pointed out in your message for this Congress, to “bear ever more fervent witness to the incomparable beauty of being a Christian, and proclaim Jesus Christ as the one Savior of the world”.

Holy Father, we live in difficult times and it seems that almost everywhere the Church faces strong headwinds and waves that prevail against her. At times, we even fear being shipwrecked. But, in these moments we hear again those reassuring words of the Lord: “Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid” (*Mt 14:27*).

By clinging securely to Christ, we can weather every storm. Together with Him, and with your gaze fixed intently on Him, Your Holiness is there steadfast at the helm, guiding this ship on course to its final destination, “towards the place of life, towards friendship with the Son of God, towards the One who gives us life, and life in abundance”. (Benedict XVI, *Homily from Inaugural mass of his Pontificate*, 24 April, 2005).

Because of this, all of us, while in affective and effective communion with the Successor of Peter, the Universal Shepherd, and while confirming our faith in the admirable teaching of Your Holiness, and while surprised and edified by the serenity and gentleness with which you guide us while sustaining the weight of the cross, and while supported by the Catholicity of the Church and the communion of saints, want to proclaim always and everywhere that the Risen Christ has won for us the definitive victory and is our ultimate and lasting peace.

Throughout this Congress we have been praying for you and for your ministry, and for your intentions. Our prayers are always with you so that the grace of Our Lord enables you to be ever more strong and courageous. May our Blessed Mother, the Holy Virgin Mary, be for you a tender refuge and source of consolation and renewed strength in difficult moments. But, it is above all, each and every one of us who entrust ourselves to your prayers. Holy Father, we ask that you remember us before the Lord. Remember those who bear witness to our Lord Jesus Christ, at times in a heroic degree, in many difficult places in our continent. Remember us as you invoke the intercession of great saints, martyrs and missionaries who have gone

before us, proclaiming the faith in our lands. Remember especially, the lay faithful of Asia, their families, their communities, their associations and movements, so that in the practice of their faith, hope and love there will shine the glory of Christ.

September 4, 2010

Seoul, Korea

Congress Participants