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12 YOUTH ENJOY LUNCH WITH THE POPE

Speak of the Church in a World of Communication

By Serena Sartini

MADRID, Spain, AUG. 20, 2011 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- "He did everything to make us feel comfortable," says one of the youth who lunched with Benedict XVI on Friday.

The Pope sat at a round table with 12 youth, two of whom represented Spain as the WYD host country and the rest representing each continent. The 12 were WYD volunteers, chosen randomly for the honor of eating with the Holy Father.

The director of the Vatican press office, Jesuit Father Federico Lombardi, recounted that one of the youth, Olivier Richard from France, is a newlywed (married just two months ago) and was thus allowed to bring his wife Alexandra to meet the Pope at the end of the meal.

"He spoke to us of the new technologies, of Facebook, and he told us that the Church has been communicating for 2,000 years, and today it should also be present in the virtual plaza, using these new instruments for the proclamation of the Gospel," one of the youth reported.

Father Lombardi said that each of the 12 spoke with the Pope, "relating the sentiments and emotions they are experiencing as they participate in WYD, bringing as well the sentiments of all the youth of the country they represent."

"The Pope listened to each one of them," he continued, "choosing to listen more than to speak."

Juan Carlos Piedra Calderon, a 33-year-old from Ecuador, was the oldest of the group. "We spoke with the Pope in Italian, English, Spanish and French," he said. "I told Benedict XVI about the situation of the youth of Latin America, I explained to him that they still seek Jesus, even though there are many difficulties. The Pope promised me prayers for the Latin American youth and he told me that he appreciated the analysis I had made."

The menu was light: "Vegetables, fish and ice cream. But I hardly ate anything, because I was so excited," said Aurora María Almagro, a 21-year-old Spaniard. "The Pope did everything to make us feel comfortable."