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Pope Stresses Importance of Education at Start of New Year

Reflects on Joy in Knowing Everlasting God Entered Our History

VATICAN CITY, JAN. 1, 2012 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- Benedict XVI says it can seem astonishing how "ultimately short and ephemeral life is," but he affirms that what gives meaning to our days is "written on the face of a Child who was born in Bethlehem 2,000 years ago, and is today the Living One, risen for ever from the dead."

The Pope offered that reflection last evening at vespers for today's feast of Mary, Mother of God.

"From within the fabric of humanity, rent asunder by so much injustice, wickedness and violence, there bursts forth in an unforeseen way the joyful and liberating novelty of Christ our Saviour, who leads us to contemplate the goodness and tenderness of God through the mystery of his Incarnation and Birth," the Holy Father said. "The everlasting God has entered our history and he remains present in a unique way in the person of Jesus, his incarnate Son, our Saviour, who came down to earth to renew humanity radically and to free us from sin and death, to raise us to the dignity of God's children."

At today's Mass, which also marks the 45th World Day of Peace, the Holy Father highlighted points from his [message](#) for the day.

He said that peace "in the fullest and highest sense, is the sum and synthesis of all blessings."

Referring to the message theme, the Holy Father added: "'Educating Young People in Justice and Peace' is a task for every generation, and thanks be to God, after the tragedies of the two great world wars, the human family has shown increasing awareness of it."

He said the Church in recent times has articulated a demand to "respond to a decisive challenge that consists precisely in education."

"Why is this a 'challenge?'" the Pope asked. "For at least two reasons: in the first place, because in the present age, so strongly marked by a technological mentality, the desire to educate and not merely to instruct cannot be taken for granted, it is a choice; in the second place, because the culture

of relativism raises a radical question: does it still make sense to educate? And then, to educate for what?"

The Pontiff affirmed that today, "to assume responsibility for educating young people in knowledge of the truth, in fundamental values and virtues, is to look to the future with hope."

Benedict XVI called for an education of conscience, and said it begins in the home. "It is essentially about helping infants, children and adolescents to develop a personality that combines a profound sense of justice with respect for their neighbour, with a capacity to address conflicts without arrogance, with the inner strength to bear witness to good, even when it involves sacrifice, with forgiveness and reconciliation. Thus they will be able to become people of peace and builders of peace."

On ZENIT's Web page:

Full text of Vespers homily: www.zenit.org/article-34062?l=english

Full text of Mass homily: www.zenit.org/article-34064?l=english

World Day of Peace address: www.zenit.org/article-34004?l=english

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