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A Jewish Reaction to WYD

Vice President of Madrid Community Discusses Common Values

By Miriam Diez i Bosch

MADRID, Spain, AUG. 26, 2011 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- "Absolute success" is the evaluation that David Hatchwell, vice president of the Jewish Community of Madrid, gives to the 26th World Youth Day.

ZENIT spoke with Hatchwell about the hundreds of thousands of Catholic young people who descended upon his city last week.

ZENIT: You gave your support to the WYD long before it was held. Why this alliance with a Catholic event of this magnitude?

Hatchwell: Those of us who think the same things must be together. Catholics, as other groups, have the right to express themselves, even if there are protests against this. They have the right to believe what they believe, and for this reason we have this closeness, because we Jews know very well what it is to be vilified.

We understand what it is to be de-legitimized, and I live it constantly in my flesh.

I am very sensitive, and not only am I concerned but I am annoyed by the tendencies to de-legitimize people. One can be in disagreement with someone, but attacks do not have to happen on groups in an unjustified manner and out of context.

In this connection our support of an event such as WYD is clear. I rejoice that this WYD was held and hence the proximity with the event.

ZENIT: I detect that you were pleased with this event.

Hatchwell: Without a doubt this trip of the Pope was an absolute success. It is the greatest event of the last decades: I don't remember something like it. To see Madrid with all kinds of young people on the streets -- people that you can tell are very healthy, with positive energy -- has been incredible, and a delight to see it. The evaluation can only be positive.

In the multitude of events that succeeded one another, it was demonstrated every day that what was wanted was a very powerful spiritual moment, and this happened.

ZENIT: There were criticisms also.

Hatchwell: Only an incident of a few thousand people, when on the other side there were 2 million. Unfortunately, some of the media fail to show the context and reported the marginal. But for me, I insist, it was an absolute success.

From what I have read, it is said that an international enterprise such as PriceWaterhouseCoopers is doing an audit, which seems very sensible to me on the part of the Church -- this transparency.

Moreover, the Day has contributed very much to the city of Madrid, so I don't understand the attempts to criticize it.

Beyond headline news, what is clear is that Madrid has been on the world map for several days, and it has been very positive for Spain.

ZENIT: What aspect of the Pope's message caught your attention most?

Hatchwell: Without a doubt the message was very important, especially the reconnection with a series of values. This appeal transcends a specific creed; they are not just Christian messages, but universal.

The Pope asked young people to be very courageous in their convictions. We are before a very profound ethical relativism, with a tendency to rob value of the things many people have as basic principles of their education.

In this we are totally in agreement with the Pope: Values are necessary in a modern society to confront relativism and to continue believing in the moral convictions that people desire.

Another striking aspect of the message was that we not live in the tyranny of the individual, there is no absolute I, but that collective common spiritual values and service are necessary today.

ZENIT: Are these values shared between Jews and Christians?

Hatchwell: Absolutely. Jews and Christians share core common values. Jesus was a Jew, and so were the first Christians; hence the shared values that without a doubt continue to be the same.

ZENIT: Since the Second Vatican Council, relations between the Catholic Church and Judaism have improved substantially.

Hatchwell: We know that for centuries the relationship between the Church and Judaism was not at all what we have now, it has improved for the past 40 years. I feel privileged to live today at a moment in which the Church sees Jews in a totally different way.

ZENIT: Do Jewish young people have meetings such as the WYD?

Hatchwell: They have meetings, but not so great. There are meetings of young people from all over the world, from Russia, Ethiopia, the United States, in which they come together and share common values. They reflect on life, service of the other, the assumption of responsibilities.

Young people are very important in our tradition. Older people have more knowledge and experience, but the present and future belongs to young people: One must always invest in them so that they will know the basis of our tradition, live it and be able to transmit it, because, if one does not make the effort with young people, in 30 years the figures could change.

It is necessary to give a basic cultural element to young people. In my case I have the good fortune of living in a democratic country where I have the right to worship, and I would be delighted if my children were able to continue this as I did, as my parents did, and so on for thousands of years. I want to inculcate in them that they are not just responsible for their microcosm, and I hope that they will have a happy and full life and with success, which is good, but serving others, not only the Jewish community, and that they be good and altruistic persons.

In this connection, again, Christians and Jews share values. Let us think that Judaism was born as the first monotheistic religion at a time when there was no right to live for everyone. If you were a slave you didn't have the same rights; there were human sacrifices. Human rights are part of the DNA of Judaism and they have configured Western society, as Christianity has for its part.

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