

Pope urges young Europeans to deepen their trust in God

POZNAN, Poland – Pope Benedict XVI has urged young Europeans to mark the new year by deepening their trust in God so they can “head boldly toward the future and its many challenges.”

“The pope trusts you to go and meet men and women who have lost the sense of God, who seek uncertainly for him, sometimes without realizing it. They need to encounter true witnesses,” the pope said in a message to 30,000 young European Christians attending a five-day meeting in Poznan. The meeting was organized by the French-based ecumenical monastic community of Taize.

He prayed that God would inspire their words and actions so they would give others hope.

In a message to the Dec. 29-Jan. 2 meeting, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople told the young people not to fear secularization, economic instability and other world crises.

“After the fall of the Berlin Wall, Europe no longer recognizes the place for Christianity that history had dedicated to it,” the patriarch said. “It is as if Christianity were being expelled from the history of Europe.

“We wish to recall here that the identity of Europe is primarily Christian and cannot be considered without this legacy,” he said.

During the meeting, the young people were housed at 150 Catholic parishes in the dioceses of Poznan and Gniezno.

The meeting’s workshops, translated into 50 languages, focused on social issues.

The German prior of the Taize community, Brother Alois Leser, urged participants to show solidarity with persecuted Christians in China, where the community is distributing a million Bibles.

He also called on them to work for “great changes” in social structures and ways of thinking, as well as for greater justice in the world’s economic and financial systems.