



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO THE CHILDREN OF ITALIAN CATHOLIC ACTION

*Consistory Hall
Thursday, 17 December 2015*

[Multimedia]

Dear Young People,

It's always nice to meet with you as Christmas approaches, and to exchange greetings. Thank you for the cake! With affection I welcome you and, through you, I wish to send my greetings and good wishes for Christmas and the New Year to all the youth who belong Catholic Action, or as you like to call it, ACR.

Thanks to your Association, many children and young people have the opportunity to get to know Jesus better, and they are helped to live the Gospel in the family, at school, in the parish, and in their sports.... By participating in ACR they feel more involved in the Church, they feel that Jesus is not distant, but that he is close, in our midst, and this brings a lot of joy! In this way you participate better at Mass and at catechism, you learn to read and follow the Gospel, and little by little you also become missionaries, that is to say, you are able to take Jesus to others.

I heard that this year the motto of your journey of formation is: "Travelling towards You". Very good! It is true: we are all travelling to the Lord, but many do not think about it! You, however, want to live this "journey" fully. What does it mean "to travel towards the Lord"? It means taking the good path, not the evil path; the path of forgiveness, not that of vengeance; the path of peace, not that of war; the path of solidarity, not that of selfishness.

In this regard, your charitable initiatives, with the help of God, in favour of migrants in the Diocese of Agrigento, are very good. May the Lord bless this project, which will lend a hand to the community committed in an exemplary manner to accommodate so many brothers and sisters who come full of hope, but also with many wounds and needs, in search of peace and bread. At yesterday's Audience, a five-month-old baby from Africa was presented to me by his parents and

they said that the child “was born on a boat off the coast of Sicily”.... Many, many... So many children manage to arrive while others do not. Everything you are doing for these people is good, thank you for doing it. You can make a special contribution to this initiative with your enthusiasm and your prayer, which I suggest you accompany with some sacrifice, in order to share necessities with other kids who are deprived. With regard to sacrifice, I would like to ask you kids a question, not the adults. If you have two pieces of candy and your friend beside you has none, what would you do? What would you do? [A child responds: “I’d give him one”]. You give one to him. And if you have one piece of candy and he has none, what would you do? [A child answers: “Split it in half!”]. Half! That’s good! Continue like this.

I see that you are accompanied by the “elders”, the leaders of Italian Catholic Action. I cordially greet them and thank them for their dedicated commitment to your Christian education. I wish everyone a happy heart and a holy Christmas. I extend this greeting to your families and to the whole of Catholic Action in all the dioceses of Italy. May the Lord bless you and may Our Lady protect you. Please, do not forget to pray for me. Now let us all pray to Our Lady together.

[Hail Mary...]