



The Holy See

PASTORAL VISIT TO THE DIOCESES OF
CAMPOBASSO-BOIANO
AND
ISERNIA-VENAFRO

MEETING WITH THE YOUNG PEOPLE OF THE DIOCESES OF ABRUZZI AND MOLISE

ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS

Piazzale del Santuario di Castelpetroso
Saturday, 5 July 2014

Video

Dear Young People, Good afternoon!

Thank you for your abundant and joyous presence. I thank Bishop Pietro Santoro for his service to the pastoral care of young people; and thank you, Sara, for being the spokesperson of the hopes and concerns of the young people of Abruzzo and Molise.

The enthusiasm and festive atmosphere which you know how to create are contagious. Enthusiasm is contagious. But do you know where this word comes from: *enthusiasm*? It comes from Greek and it means “to have something of God inside” or “to be inside God”. Enthusiasm, when it is healthy, demonstrates this: that one has something of God inside and expresses him joyously. *Be open* — with this enthusiasm — *to hope and to yearn for fullness*, yearn to give meaning to your future, to your whole life, to imagine the appropriate journey for each of you and to choose the path that brings you peace and human fulfillment. Appropriate journey, choose the path... what does this mean? Do not stand still — a young person cannot stand still! — and *journey*. This means *go toward something*; because a person can move and not be one who journeys, but a “wanderer”, who roams, roams, roams through life... But life is not made for “*roaming through*”, it is made to “*journey through*”, and this is your challenge!

On the one hand, you are searching for what really counts, what remains stable over time and is *definitive*, you are searching for answers that enlighten your mind and warm your heart not only for a morning or for a short stretch of road, but for ever. Light in your heart for ever, light in your mind for ever, the heart warmed for ever, definitively. On the other hand, you have great fear of making mistakes — it is true, one who journeys can go the wrong way — you are *afraid of getting too involved* in things — you have felt, many times; the temptation to always leave open a little means of escape, that can always lead to new scenarios and opportunities. I will go in this direction, but I will leave this door open: if I do not like it, I shall turn back and I can leave. This temporary nature is not good; it is not good because it makes the mind dark and the heart cold.

Contemporary society and its prevailing cultural models — for example, the “culture of the temporary” — do not offer *an atmosphere that promotes the cultivation of stable life choices with strong bonds*, built on the rock of love and responsibility rather than on the sand of temporary emotion. The aspiration for individual autonomy is pushed to the point of always questioning everything, so it becomes relatively easy to go back on important and well-thought-out decisions for the future, which were taken freely with commitment and dedication. This fosters superficiality in the assumption of responsibilities, such that deep in the mind they risk being considered as something which can be ignored anyway. Today I choose this, tomorrow I shall choose the other thing.... I am fancy free; or when my enthusiasm is spent, my desire, I shall start on another path.... And this way one “roams through” life, really in a labyrinth. But life is not a labyrinth! When you catch yourselves roaming in a labyrinth, I go here, I go here, I go here... stop! Search for the thread leading out of the labyrinth; search for the thread: life cannot be burnt out roaming around.

However, dear young people, the heart of the human being aspires to great things, lofty values, deep friendships, ties that are strengthened rather than broken by the trials of life. The human being aspires to love and to be loved. This is our deepest aspiration: to love and be loved; and definitively. The culture of the temporary does not honour our freedom, but deprives us of our true destiny, of our truest and most authentic goals. It is a piecemeal life. It is sad to reach a certain age, to look back over the journey we have made and find that it was made up of different pieces, without unity, without decisiveness: everything temporary.... Do not allow yourselves to be robbed of the will to build great and lasting things in your life! This is what leads you forward. Do not content yourselves with little goals. Aspire to happiness, have courage, the courage to go outside of yourselves and bet on the fullness of your future together with Jesus.

We cannot do it alone. In facing the pressure of events and trends, we will never manage to find the right path alone, and should we find it, we would not have enough strength to persevere, to face the climb and the unexpected obstacles. And this is where the Lord Jesus’ invitation comes in: “If you would... follow me”. He invites us in order to accompany us on the journey, not to exploit us, not to make slaves of us, but to free us. To this freedom he invites us in order to accompany us on the journey. That is how it is. Only *together with Jesus*, praying to him and following him do we find clarity of vision and strength to go forward. He loves us definitively, he has chosen us

definitively, he gave himself to each of us definitively. He is our defender and big brother and will be our only judge. How beautiful it is to be able to face life's ups and downs in Jesus' company, to have his Person and his message with us! He does not take away autonomy or liberty; on the contrary, by fortifying our fragility, he permits us to be truly free, free to do good, strong to continue doing it, capable of forgiving, capable of asking for forgiveness. This is Jesus who accompanies us, the Lord is like this!

One word that I like to repeat, because we often forget it: God never tires of forgiving. And this is true! So great is his love, which is always near us. It is we who tire of asking for forgiveness, but He always forgives, every time with ask him to.

He forgives definitively, he wipes out and forgets our sin if we turn to him with humility and trust. He helps us not to become discouraged in the face of difficulties, not to consider them insurmountable; and then, trusting in Him, you will again cast the nets for a surprising and abundant catch, you will have courage and hope in facing even difficulties that arise from the effects of the economic crisis. Courage and hope are qualities that everyone has, but they are most befitting in young people: courage and hope. The future is surely in the hands of God, the hands of a provident Father. This does not mean denying difficulties and problems, but seeing them, yes, as temporary and surmountable. Difficulties, crises, can with God's help and the good will of all, be overcome, defeated, transformed.

I do not want to end without saying a word about a problem that affects you, a problem that you actually experience: unemployment. It is sad to find "neither-nor" young people. What does it mean, this "neither-nor"? They *neither* study because they cannot, they do not have the means, *nor* work. And this is the challenge that all of us in the community must defy. We must go forward to defy this challenge! We cannot resign ourselves to losing a whole generation of young people who do not have the powerful dignity of work! Work gives us dignity, and all of us need to do everything possible so as not to lose a generation of young people. To develop our creativity, so the young people feel the joy of dignity that comes from work. A generation without work is a loss for their homeland and for future humanity. We must fight against this. And help one another to find a way of solution, of aid, of solidarity. Young people are courageous, I have said this, the young have hope and — third — the young have the capacity for solidarity. And this word *solidarity* is a word that the world today does not like to hear. Some people think that it is a bad word. No, it is not a bad word, it is a *Christian* word: go forward with your brother and sister to help them overcome problems. Courageous, with hope and with solidarity.

We are gathered here in front of the *Shrine of Our Lady of Sorrows*, built in 1888 in the place where two girls from this area, Fabiana and Serafina, had a vision of the Mother of God while they were working in the fields. Mary is mother, she always assists us: when we are working and when we are looking for work, when we have clear ideas and when we are confused, when prayer flows spontaneously and when the heart is desolate: She is always there to help us. Mary is the Mother

of God, our mother and mother of the Church. So many men and women, young and old have turned to Her to say 'thank you' and to beg a favour. Mary takes us to Jesus and Jesus gives us peace. Let us turn to Her, trusting in her assistance, with courage and hope. May the Lord bless each of you, on your path, on your journey of courage, of hope and of solidarity. Thank you!

Now let us all pray together to Our Lady: Hail Mary,

[Blessing]

Please, I ask you to pray for me: please, do so! And do not forget: "journey through life", never "roam through life"!

Thank you!