



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF PUERI CANTORES

Thursday, 31 December 2015

[Multimedia]

[First question]: What do you think of our singing? Do you like to sing?

“What do you think of our singing? Do you like to sing?” I would like to hear you sing some more! I only heard one song, I hope you will do others.... I like to listen to singing, but, were I to sing, I would sound like a donkey, because I cannot sing. I don't speak well either, because I have a phonetic speech defect.... But I really enjoy listening to singing. I will tell you a story. As a child — there were five of us siblings — as children, at 2:00 pm on Saturday afternoon, our mom would make us sit in front of the radio to listen. What did we listen to? Every Saturday they broadcast an opera. And mom taught us about opera, she explained: “Listen to how she does this...”. Since I was a child I have enjoyed listening to singing. But I have never been able to sing. However, one of my grandfathers, who was a carpenter, always sang while he worked, always. The pleasure of listening to singing began when I was a child. I really like music and singing. And what do I think of your singing? I hope to hear some more of it. Okay? Is that possible?

I'll tell you something: singing refines the soul, singing is good for the soul. For example, when a mother wants to put her child to sleep, she doesn't say: “One, two, three, four...”. She sings him a lullaby... she sings it... and it is good for the soul, the baby becomes peaceful and falls asleep. St Augustine had a very beautiful phrase. Each of you should learn it in your own language. Speaking about Christian life, about the joy of Christian life, he said this: “Sing and walk”. Christian life is a journey, but it is not a sorrowful journey, it is a joyful journey. For this reason, sing. Do not forget: sing and walk! Each of you say it in your own language: sing and walk! [They repeat: “Sing and walk!”]. I didn't hear it clearly.... [“Sing and walk!”]. That's it. Remember this: sing and walk. This way your soul will rejoice in the joy of the Gospel more.

[Second question]: How do you manage to always be so good, do you ever get angry? What are your New Year's resolutions?

Once a youth approached Jesus and said words similar to yours. He said: "Jesus, good teacher". And Jesus looked at him and said: "No, God alone is good". God alone is good, Jesus said. What about us? Are we bad? No, half and half, we have a little of everything.... We always have that wound of original sin that leads us to not always be so good.... But always remember: God alone is good, and if you want to find goodness, go to the Lord, he is all goodness, all love, all merciful. Do you know what I do in order to be better? I draw close to the Lord, and I ask the Lord: "Lord, may I not be too sinful, may I not be too bad, may I not be cruel to anyone, may I not be jealous, envious, may I not get mixed up in networks that are so many...". All these things. Ask for the grace to be good, because God alone is good. You have to learn this too. Shall we say it all together? Each one in his own language: "God alone is good". [They repeat: "God alone is good"]. Once more ["God alone is good"]. Remember the advice of St Augustine that you repeated all together, what was it? [They repeat: "Sing and walk!"]. God alone is good. Remember this very well.

However there are good people, yes, who are close to the Lord, saints! Many saints are hidden in everyday life, in our lives, so many people who suffer and offer their suffering for the conversion of sinners. So very many people who approach the goodness of the Lord, are saints. But who is only good? [They respond: "God"]. God alone is good.

The other question is: "Do you ever get angry?". Yes, I get angry, but I don't bite! Sometimes I get angry, when someone does something wrong, I get a little.... But it helps me to stop and think of the times that I have angered others. I think and I ask myself: have I made another person angry? Well, yes, many times. Then you have no right to get angry. But this one did.... Yes, but if this one did something that is mean, which isn't good, call him and talk to him as a brother, speak as brothers and sisters, speak, speak. But without getting cross, because anger is poisonous, it poisons the soul. I have often seen frightened children and kids. Why? Because their parents, or at school, yell at them. When one is irate and yells it does harm, it wounds: yelling at another is like striking the soul with a knife, this is not good. Do you understand?

I get angry, yes, sometimes I do get angry, but it helps me to think about the times that I made others angry, this calms me down somewhat, it puts me a little more at ease. Getting angry is something that harms not only the other person, it hurts you personally, it poisons you personally. There are people, whom you certainly know, who have a bitter soul, who are always bitter, who live in anger. It seems as though they brush their teeth with vinegar every morning in order to be so angry! People who are like this...: it is a sickness. You see, if there is something that I don't like, I get a little annoyed. But this, the habit or the tendency to get angry, the habit of yelling at others, this is poison! I ask you, and each one answer in your own language: what was Jesus' soul like, gentle or bitter? [They respond: "Gentle!"]. Why was he gentle? Because when he got angry, it was not from his soul, it was only in order to correct, and then he returned to peace.

"What are your New Year's resolutions?". I have made one resolution in these days, in which I

have taken a little time to make a spiritual retreat: to pray more. Because I have come to realize that bishops and priests — I am a bishop — have to support the People of God first of all with prayer, it is the primary service. I'll tell you a story. At the beginning of Christianity there was a lot of work because many people were converting and the Apostles didn't have enough time. Some began to complain because they could not take good care of the widows and orphans. It was true, but they did not have time to do everything. They formed a council among them and decided to designate several men to serve the people. It was the moment of the creation of deacons. This is how deacons came into being. You can see this in the Book of the Acts of the Apostles. What does Peter say, St Peter, the first Pope? What does he say? "They shall do this, and we, the Apostles, shall do only two things: pray and proclaim the Gospel, preach". So, for a bishop, the first task is prayer, the primary task: one cannot be a bishop in the Church without praying in the first place. Then proclaiming the Gospel. In these days, in answer to your question, I thought that a resolution for the coming year could be this, to pray a little bit more. Okay? I also ask you: do you think this would be a good resolution for you too? [They respond: "Yes!"]. Pray a little bit more. Because the Church moves forward with the prayers of saints. Pray for the Church!

[Third question]: When you were little, what did you dream of becoming? In the evening, when I watch television with my family, I see so many sad and tragic stories: will the world always be like this, even when I grow up?

If I told you the truth about that question I would make you laugh.... But I will tell the truth. The question was: "When you were little, what did you dream of becoming?" As a little boy I often went with my grandma, with my mom too, to the market to do the shopping. At that time there were no supermarkets, there was no television, there was no such thing.... The market was on the street and there were stalls for vegetables, for fruit, for meat, for fish, and you could buy everything. One day at home, at table, I was asked: what do you want to be when you grow up? Do you know what I said? "A butcher". Why? Because the butcher at the market — there were three or four stalls for meat — took the knife, cut pieces.... it is an art, and I liked seeing him, watching him. Now I think differently, obviously; but, to answer your question, when I was little, I thought about becoming a butcher. I would have liked to.

Then, the second question — this is serious! — was: "In the evening, when I'm having dinner with my family, watching television, I see so much sad and tragic news. Will the world always be like this when I grow up?". What you say is true. There are many people suffering in the world today. There are wars. How many wars are there? In Africa, think about how many wars there are. All of the Middle East, where Jesus was born, is at war. Ukraine, war. In so many places. In Latin America there are wars. So many ugly things! And what do wars make? They make poverty, pain, evil. Only painful things.... Think of the children. You, kids, boys and girls, have God's gift of being able to sing, of being happy, of living the Christian life as St Augustine said — what was it that St Augustine said? [They respond: "Sing and walk!"] — but there are children in the world who have nothing to eat; there are children who cannot go to school because there is war, poverty, and there

are no schools. There are children who, when they get sick, do not have the chance to go to hospital. Pray for these children. Pray! Will the world always be like this? The world can improve. But there is one thing we don't like to talk about, but that must be talked about: in the world there is a struggle between good and evil — the philosophers say — a struggle between the devil and God. This still exists. When each one of us wants to do something cruel, that little bit of cruelty is an inspiration of the devil, who, through the weakness left within us by original sin, leads us to this. Evil is done in small things as in big things; in conflicts such as — for example — a boy or a girl who tells lies: it is a war against the truth of God, against the truth of life, against joy. This struggle between the devil and God, the Bible says will continue until the end. This is clear, isn't it? Do you understand this? It's clear. We all have a battlefield within us. All of us struggle between good and evil. We have graces and temptations, and we must speak with the parish priest, with the catechist about these things in order to understand them properly. This is the first thing. The second thing: there are so many good things in the world, and I ask myself: why aren't these good things publicized? Because it seems like people prefer to see dreadful things or hear bad news. Let's think about Africa: so many terrible things, so many wars — as I said — but there are missionaries, priests, nuns, who have spent their whole lives there, preaching the Gospel, in poverty.... When I went to Africa last month, I found a few nuns.... I'm thinking of an 83-year-old Italian nun who told me: "I've been here since I was 26 years old". And there are so many holy families, so many parents who raise their children well. Why don't you see on television a family that is raising, educating a child in the best way? It isn't shown! Because there is this attraction toward evil: it seems more pleasing to watch ugly things than beautiful things, great things. The devil plays his part — this is true — but God too plays his part: so many holy people! Not only in the missions but in the world, at work, in families; so many parents, so many grandfathers and grandmothers who carry on despite illness, problems; and you don't see this on television. Why? Because this doesn't get ratings, it doesn't make headlines.... Here, in Italy, I have discovered many associations, men and women, who give part of their own time to attend to, to accompany, to be caregivers to the sick. This is good. But this doesn't make headlines. Is this true or not? If you have ratings — whether in journalism, television, or what have you — you only show ugly things; people get bored with good things. Or else they don't know how to present and do things attractively, to show the good side of things.

When you [turning to the girl who asked the question] watch television, at home, remember these two things: there is a struggle against good and evil in the world, there are many suffering children, there are wars, there are dreadful things, because the struggle is between God and the devil; but also think about the many people, so many pious people who give their lives to help others, to pray for others. Why don't you see on television the cloistered nuns who spend their lives praying for everyone? This isn't interesting.... Maybe the gems of an important company, which are shown, are more interesting... the things that give rise to vanity. Let's not allow ourselves to be misled! There are terrible, terrible, terrible things in the world, and this is the devil's work against God; but there are holy things, saintly things, great things that are the work of God. There are hidden saints. Let us not forget this phrase: hidden saints, those whom we do not see. Right?

I thank you for all of this. But I would like to hear another song in order to say whether or not I like the way you sing.... And there is another thing: I would like to hear you repeat how Christian life should be, according to St Augustine? How should it be? [They respond: "Sing and walk"]. Sing and walk! Second: who is good? ["God alone is good"]. That's it. Now I expect a beautiful song.... Thank you!

[Singing]

Now I can answer: you sing very well! Thank you!

I impart the blessing to you and also my best wishes for the new year. Tomorrow we shall see each other in the Basilica, it will be a pleasure.

Let us pray to Our Lady, each one in his or her own language. [*Hail Mary* and blessing]