



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE FOURTH EUROPEAN MEETING ON YOUTH MINISTRY
[ROME, 11-13 DECEMBER 2014]**

[Multimedia]

*To Venerable Brother
Cardinal Stanisław Ryłko
President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity*

I address my cordial greeting to you, to the Bishops, to the national leaders and to the young people gathered these days in Rome for the Fourth European Meeting on Youth Ministry, sponsored by the Pontifical Council for the Laity in cooperation with the Council of European Bishops' Conferences on the theme: *A young Church witnessing to the joy of the Gospel*.

After the three meetings during the 90s, you have resumed "walking together through the streets of Europe". Along the way, I invite you to recognize that, as we are talking and discussing together, Jesus himself draws near and walks with us (cf. Lk 24:15). Like the disciples in Emmaus, let us allow Him to open our eyes in order to recognize Him, helping us find in Him the meaning of this difficult but exciting piece of history that is being given to us to live together.

You, who work in the field of youth ministry, are doing valuable work for the Church. Young people need this service: adults and mature peers in the faith who accompany them on their journey, helping them to find the path that leads to Christ. Much more than promoting a series of activities *for* young people, this ministry consists in walking *with* them, accompanying them personally in the complex and sometimes difficult situations in which they are immersed.

Youth ministry is called to gather the questions of young people today, and starting from them, to bring a true and honest dialogue in order to bring Christ into their life. In this sense, a true dialogue can be made by those who have a *personal relationship* with the Lord Jesus, which overflows into the relationship with brothers and sisters.

This is the reason you have come together, to create a European "network" of acquaintances and

friendships, thanks to which the continent's youth ministry leaders may share experiences attained "in the field" and the questions that stem from them. We are well aware that there is much to do. I ask you to never tire of proclaiming the Gospel, through your life and your word: today's Europe needs to rediscover it!

I would like to therefore encourage you to consider the present reality of European young people through the gaze of Christ. May He teach us to see not only challenges and problems, but to recognize the many seeds of love and of hope scattered on the soil of this continent, which has given to the Church a great number of men and women saints, and many of these are young people! Let us not forget that we have been assigned the task of sowing, but it is God who gives growth to the seeds we scatter (cf. 1 Cor 3:7).

As you sow the Word of the Lord in this vast field that is the European youth, you have the opportunity to account for the hope that is in you, with gentleness and reverence (cf. 1 Pet 3:15). You can help young people to realize that faith is not compared to reason, and thus accompany them to become joyous leaders of evangelization to their peers.

Lastly, dear friends, in this year which at the same time draws attention to the family and to consecrated life, youth ministry is called to propose to young people a journey of vocational discernment, in order to prepare oneself to follow Jesus on the path of conjugal and familial life or on that of special consecration to the service of the Kingdom of God.

I pray to the Lord, through the intercession of the Holy Virgin, in order that the work of these days may bear a wealth of fruit for your undertaking in youth ministry and, even before, for your journey of holiness, for it is holiness that enables the Church to grow and opens hearts to welcome the Gospel. I ask you to please pray for me and I bless you with affection.

From the Vatican, 11 December 2014

FRANCIS