



The Holy See

PASTORAL VISIT TO CAGLIARI

MEETING WITH THE YOUNG PEOPLE

ADDRESS OF HOLY FATHER FRANCIS

Largo Carlo Felice, Cagliari

Sunday, 22 September 2013

Dear Young People of Sardinia,

It seems as if there are a few young people, doesn't it? A few or many? There are lots!

Thank you for coming to this meeting in such large numbers! And thank you to the “spokespeople”. Seeing you reminds me of the World Youth Day in Rio de Janeiro. Perhaps several of you were there, but many must certainly have followed it on television and on the internet. It was a very beautiful experience, a celebration of faith and brotherhood that filled one with joy. The same joy that we feel today. Let us thank the Lord and the Virgin Mary, Our Lady of Bonaria: it is she who has enabled us to meet here. Pray to her often, she is a good mother, I assure you! Some of your “queries”, your questions... but I also speak in dialect, here too! Some of your questions are similar. I am thinking of the Gospel by the shores of the Sea of Galilee, where Simon, who Jesus was later to call Peter, and his brother Andrew, together with James and John, also brothers, all lived and worked as fishermen. Jesus was surrounded by the crowd who wanted to listen to his word. He saw those fishermen mending their nets beside the boats. He climbed on to Simon's boat and asked him to put out a little from the shore. So it was that he spoke to the people sitting in the boat; Jesus addressed the people from the boat. When he had finished, he told Simon to put out into the deep and let down his nets. This request was a “trial” for Simon — listen carefully to the word: a “trial” — for he and the others had just come back from fishing all night with nothing to show for it. Simon was a sincere and practical man, and he immediately said to Jesus: “Master, we toiled all night and took nothing”.

This is the first point: *the experience of failure*. In your questions there was this experience: the sacrament of Confirmation, — what is this sacrament called? Confirmation... No! Its name has changed: the “sacrament of farewell”. They do this and then they leave the Church. Is this true or not? This is an experience of failure. The other experience of failure: young people aren’t in the parishes: you yourselves have talked about this. This experience of a failure, something that goes wrong, a disappointment. Youth looks ahead, but at times it happens to experience failure, some frustration. This is a trial and it is important! And now I want to pose a question to you; however, do not reply out loud but in silence. May each one of you think in his or her heart, think of your own experiences of failure, think about them. It is certain: we all have such experiences, we all have them.

We very frequently have this experience in the Church: priests, catechists, and animators tire themselves out, they spend so much energy, they put everything into it, and in the end they do not always see results that correspond to their efforts. Your “spokespeople” also said this in their first two questions. They referred to the communities where faith seems somewhat faded, where few of the faithful take an active part in the life of the Church, Christians are seen who are sometimes weary and sad and many young people move off after receiving Confirmation. The sacrament of farewell, of goodbye, as I said. It is an experience of failure, an experience that leaves emptiness and discourages us. Is this true or not? [*Yes, the young people answer*] Is it true or not? [*Yes, they answer once again*].

2. In the face of this situation you are right to wonder: what can we do? Of course one thing is to let oneself be overcome by pessimism and distrust. Pessimistic Christians: how awful! You young people can’t and mustn’t be lacking in hope, hope is part of your being. A young person without hope is not young but has aged prematurely! Hope is part of your youth! If you don’t have any hope, think seriously, think seriously.... A young person without joy and without hope is upsetting: he is not young. And when a young person has no joy, when he lacks confidence in life or loses hope, where can he go to find a bit of tranquillity, a bit of peace? Without trust, without hope and without joy? You know, the merchants of death, these merchants that sell death, offer you a way out when you are sad, when you are without hope, without trust and disheartened! Please don’t sell your youth to these people who sell death! All of you know what I’m talking about! You have all got it: don’t sell!

Let’s return to the scene of the Gospel: Peter, in that critical moment, takes a risk. What could he have done? He could have given in to weariness and to discouragement, thinking that it is pointless and that it is better to withdraw and go home. Instead, what does he do? With courage, he steps out of himself and decides to trust Jesus. He says: “Well, alright! At your word I will let down the nets”. Be careful! He does not say: at my strength, my calculations, my experience as an expert fisherman, but rather “at your word”, at the word of Jesus! And the result is an incredible catch, the nets are filled to the point that they almost tear.

This is the second point: *trusting Jesus, trusting Jesus*. And when I say this I want to be sincere and to tell you that I do not come here to sell you an illusion. I come here to say: there is a Person who can keep you going, trust in him! It is Jesus! Trust in Jesus! And Jesus is not an illusion! Trust in Jesus. The Lord is always with us. He comes to the shores of the sea of our life, he makes himself close to our failures, our frailty, and our sins in order to transform them. Never stop staking yourselves on him, over and over again, as good sportsmen — some of you know this well from experience — who can face the strain of training in order to achieve results! Difficulties must not frighten you but on the contrary spur you to go beyond them. Hear Jesus' words as though they were addressed to you: put out into the deep and let down your nets, young people of Sardinia! Put out into the deep! Be ever more docile to the Lord's word; it is he, it is his word, it is following him that brings to fruition your commitment to witnessing. When your efforts to reawaken faith in your friends seem to be in vain, like the nocturnal efforts of the fishermen, remember that with Jesus everything changes. The word of the Lord has filled the nets and the word of the Lord makes the missionary work of his disciples effective. Following Jesus is demanding, it means not being satisfied with small goals of little account but aiming on high with courage!

It is not good — it is not good — to stop at “we took nothing”; rather, go further, to “put out into the deep and let down your nets”, once again, and without tiring! Jesus repeats this to each one of you. And it is he who will give you the strength! There is the threat of complaining or of resignation. Let's leave these epithets to the followers of the “goddess of lamentation”. And you, are you following the “goddess of lamentation”? Are you continuously wailing as in a funeral wake? No, young people can't do that! The “goddess of lamentation” is a deception: she makes you take the wrong road. When everything seems to be standing still and stagnant, when personal problems disturb us and social hardships do not meet with the right responses, it is not good to consider oneself vanquished. Jesus is the way: get him to embark on our “boat” and put out into the deep with him! He is the Lord! He changes the prospect of life. Faith in Jesus leads to a hope that goes further, to a certainty based not on our qualities and skills alone, but on the word of God, on the invitation that comes from him. Without making too many human calculations and without worrying about checking whether the situation that surrounds you coincides with your points of security. Put out into the deep, go out of yourselves: go out of our small world and open ourselves to God, to open ourselves increasingly also to our brethren. Opening ourselves to God is opening ourselves to others. Take a few steps outside ourselves, little steps, but take them. Little steps, going out of yourselves toward God and toward others, opening your heart to brotherhood, to friendship and to solidarity.

3. Third — and I conclude; it is somewhat lengthy! “Let down your nets for catch” (v. 4). Dear young Sardinians, the third thing I want to tell you, and in this way I am answering the other two questions, is that *you too are called to become “fishers of men”*. Don't hesitate to spend your life witnessing joyfully to the Gospel, especially among your peers. I want to tell you of a personal experience. Yesterday I celebrated the 60th anniversary of the day when I heard Jesus' voice in my heart. I am telling you this not so that you will make me a cake here, no, that is not why I'm

saying it. However, it is a commemoration: 60 years since that day. I will never forget it. The Lord made me strongly aware that I should take that path. I was 17 years old. Several years passed before this decision, this invitation became concrete and definitive. So many years have gone by, with some successes and joys but so many years with failures, frailties, sin... 60 years on the Lord's road, behind him, beside him, always with him. I only tell you this: I have no regrets! I have no regrets! Why? Because I feel like Tarzan and I feel strong enough to go ahead? No, I have not regretted it because always, even at the darkest moments, the moments of sin and moments of frailty, moments of failure, I have looked at Jesus and trusted in him and he has not deserted me. Trust in Jesus: he always keeps on going, he goes with us! However, listen, he never let us down. He is faithful, he is a faithful companion. Think, this is my witness: I am glad about these 60 years with the Lord. However, something more about moving ahead.

Have I gone on for too long? [*No, the youth reply*]. Let's stay united in prayer. And journey on in this life with Jesus: the saints did it.

Saints are like this: they are not born perfect, already holy! They become so because, like Simon Peter they trust in the word of the Lord and "put out into the deep". Your land has contributed so many witnesses and recently too: the Blessed: Antonia Mesina, Gabriella Sagheddu, Giuseppina Nicoli; the Servants of God: Edvige Carboni, Simonetta Tronci and Fr Antonio Loi. They are ordinary people who instead of complaining "let down their nets for a catch". Imitate their example, entrust yourselves to their intercession and always be men and women of hope! No complaining! No discouragement! Never be depressed, never go to purchase comfort from death: none of it! Go forward with Jesus! He never fails, he never disappoints, he is loyal!

Pray for me. And may Our Lady go with you.

Before the Blessing Pope Francis added these words:

Dear young people, before imparting the blessing to you I wanted to tell you something else. When I said journey on with Jesus, it is in order to build, to do good things, to carry on with your life, to help others, to build a better world and peace. But there are wrong decisions, erroneous decisions, because there are decisions that involve destruction. Today in Pakistan, because of a wrong decision, because of hatred, of war there was an attack and 70 people died. This road is no good, it is useless. It is the only the road of peace that builds a better world! However if you don't build it, if you don't build it, no one else will! This is a problem, and I leave you with this question: "Am I ready, am I willing to take a road to building a better world?". That is all. And let us pray an "Our Father" for all these people who died in the attack in Pakistan. *Our Father...*

May Our Lady always help us to work for a better world, to take the road of building, the road of peace, and never the road of destruction and the road of war.

May Almighty God bless you, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Please pray for me. And goodbye!

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