



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO MEMBERS OF THE SHALOM CATHOLIC COMMUNITY

*Paul VI Audience Hall
Monday, 4 September 2017*

[Multimedia]

Thank you very much for your testimonies. I asked if I could speak in Spanish ... [*audience responds "yes"*] and not in Italian, so that I can express myself better. But in speaking Spanish, there is also a bit of *portuñol* [a mixture of Spanish and Portuguese] and a bit of *cocoliche*, which is a bit of Italian and Spanish together.... So we can manage with Spanish.

Juan, you have found the meaning of your life in prayer, in the life of a fraternal community and in evangelization, is that right? By praying, sharing and evangelizing, you realized that your life had meaning. Notice that the three verbs that you used to express this are verbs of movement, of coming out of yourself. You came out of yourself in prayer to encounter God. You came out of yourself in sharing brotherhood to encounter your brothers and you came out of yourself to go and evangelize, to proclaim the Good News. And the Good News — you used this term — is mercy in a world marked by despair and indifference. It is curious that mercy is something which is absolute. You cannot just talk about mercy. You have to bear witness to it, you have to share it, you have to teach it by going out of yourself. In order to talk about mercy, there is a need to put all of 'the meat on the grill', otherwise this testimony of not being closed within oneself or within one's own interests, but rather of going out, is not understood. To go out looking for God. Searching for God is not easy. It is all a journey. Going out, sharing with others — not playing at being the spoiled child to whom everyone gives toys and whom everyone favours — and going out to tell others that God is good, that God is waiting for you, even in life's worst moments. And perhaps that is the message of mercy that one can give, is it not? Recall the passage of the son returning home. In Luke, chapter 15, there is a sentence which reads: the father saw him coming from afar. He had left home a few years earlier, which led him to spend all the money he had. He saw him coming from afar. This makes me think that that father, every day, and perhaps at every moment,

went to the terrace to see if his son were returning. This is how God is with us, even in the most sinful moments, as well as in difficult moments. And the Gospel continues: “While he was yet at a distance, his father saw him and had compassion” — with that verb which in Hebrew means his heart was in tumult, this paternal and maternal heart of God — “and ran and embraced him”. That son was in the worst of sin, in the worst of situations, and when he said, “I will go to my father”, the father was already waiting for him. That is mercy, never giving in to despair. Moreover, it seems that our God has a special predilection for sinners, including the ‘thoroughbred’: he waits for them. So I suggest that you continue to go out of yourself and make everyone understand that there is always a father who waits for us with affection and tenderness, at the first step we wish to take. This is what I feel I should tell you. Thank you.

Justine, you received Baptism during the Jubilee of Mercy. How beautiful! You realized, having found God, that he led you to strip yourself, to stop being self-centred, to go outward, toward the joy of living for God and with God. One of the things — here everyone is young, including you who are the young of the second season, all young, young people of the second stage — one of the things that characterizes youth and the eternal youth of God, because God is eternally young, is cheerfulness, “joy”, cheerfulness. Cheerfulness is the opposite of sadness. Indeed, sadness is precisely what you have come out of. You have come out of something that induces sadness, which is being focused on yourself, being self-referential. A young person who withdraws into him or herself, who lives only for him or herself, winds up — and I hope you understand the verb because it is an Argentinian verb — winds up *empachado* with self-referentiality, that is, brimming with self-referentiality. An image now comes to mind: this culture in which we have to live, because it is very self-centred, much like this [*the Pope gestures*], introspective, with a very large dose of narcissism, of that being, of that contemplating oneself, and thus ignoring others. Narcissism produces sadness because you constantly worry about making-up your soul every day, to appear better than what you are, pondering whether you are more beautiful than the others. It is the sickness of the mirror. Young people, break the mirror! Do not look in the mirror because the mirror is deceiving. Look outward; look at others; escape from this world, from this culture around us — to which you referred — which is consumeristic and narcissistic. And if one day you would like to look in the mirror, I will give you some advice: look in the mirror to laugh at yourself. Try it one day: look and begin to laugh at what you see there, it will refresh your soul. This brings cheerfulness and saves us from the temptation of narcissism. Thank you, Justine.

Mateus, you spoke in Portuguese, Brazilian. I have to ask you a question: which player is better, Pelè or Maradona? [*laughter and applause from the audience*]. You spent a long time in the abyss of drugs, and it is one of the tools today’s culture uses to dominate us, and it is, on the other hand, like a need that we have to make ourselves thin, invisible to our own selves, as if we were air. Drugs cause us to deny everything of ours that was rooted — with physical roots, historical roots, problematical roots, everything that is rooted. It takes your roots away and it makes you live in a world without roots, that is uprooted, eradicated from everything. Eradicated from projects, eradicated from the present, eradicated from your past, from your history, eradicated from your

homeland, from your family, from your love, from everything. One lives in a world without any roots and this is the tragedy of drugs. Young people, completely uprooted, without any real commitments, and thus without true physical commitments because with drugs, you do not even feel your own body. And after going through that experience of invisibility and after realizing this, you became aware of all the roots that there are in the heart. I ask each of you: are you aware of the true roots that you have in your heart; are you aware of your roots; are you aware of your loves; are you aware of your projects; are you aware of the creative abilities you have; are you aware that you are poets in this universe, to create new and beautiful things? To come out of drugs means to become aware of this, the witness of one who is coming out. This is why we ask ourselves the questions I have just asked. And each one of us answers to ourself: am I conscious of having my feet firmly on the ground with all that entails: historical, social roots, roots of wisdom, love, projects, creative ability? And you want to fulfil God's plan and you have realized that, for you, this means to soothe the suffering of mankind and you say that you would like to discern your vocation on this synodal journey. And we all have to discern our vocation on this synodal journey — as you said — to see what the Lord wants to tell us in view of a mission. I will tell you in just one word which is not mine: to give 'freely': If you are here, if we are here, it is because they have brought us here freely. Please, let us give freely what we have received. Give freely what we have received. Giving freely fills your soul; it de-commercializes you; it makes you magnanimous; it teaches you to embrace and to kiss; it makes you smile; it releases you from all selfish interests. Give freely what you freely received. Is this the teaching He is proposing to us? [*a weak 'yes' from the audience*] Oh my God, what state you are in! It seems that instead of enlivening you, I am sedating your nerves to put you to sleep. [*applause*]

And what should the more adult ones, the senior members of the Shalom Community do? What service is the world, this charism, this community, asking of us today? What service? Here there is a thing — it is beautiful — the eldest and the youngest. The service that is asked of them is dialogue, dialogue among yourselves, passing the torch, passing on the heritage, passing on the charism, passing on your interior experience. But I want to go further. One of the challenges that this world demands of us is the dialogue between the young and the old and in this regard I rely on your testimony: 'Yes father, we already hear people tell us this'. And you will hear me say this many more times: dialogue between the young and the old. The young need to listen to the old and the old need to listen to the young. A young person might ask 'and what will I do? What will I do, talk to a bored elderly person, is that it?'. I have had the experience of seeing it many times in the other diocese: to go with a group of young people, for example to a retirement home or a shelter to play the guitar for the elderly. Well, the guitar is played and then the dialogue begins. It is spontaneous; it starts; it springs from itself and young people do not want to leave because wisdom comes from the elderly which touches the heart and pushes them to go forward. The elderly — for you young people — are not to be preserved in a closet, the elderly are not to be kept hidden, the elderly are waiting for a young person to go there and to make them talk, make them dream. And you, young people, you need to receive from these men and these women, these dreams, these hopes that can make them live again. This is my response to the experience

that the more senior and the younger members of the Shalom Movement will have to undertake by teaching and aiding dialogue between the old and the young.

‘Yes I speak with my mother, with my father’. No, your father and mother are not elderly. Speak with your grandfather or your grandmother, that is, a generation further back. They have wisdom and, moreover, they need you to knock at their heart so that they may give you the wisdom. And this is the recommendation that I give to you: have courage, encourage each other in this dialogue, this dialogue is a promise for the future, this dialogue will help you to go forward. I do not know if I have answered your question. (Moses answers: ‘yes’.) Very well, thank you. I do not know how the programme will continue now, but I still have a doubt at the end of the last question on dialogue between the old and the young. Is Moses young or old? (The answer: I am like you, Holy Father, I am like you).