



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO RIO DE JANEIRO ON THE OCCASION OF THE XXVIII WORLD YOUTH DAY

MASS WITH BISHOPS, PRIESTS, RELIGIOUS AND SEMINARIANS

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

Cathedral of San Sebastian, Rio de Janeiro
Saturday, 27 July 2013

[[Multimedia](#)]

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Seeing this Cathedral full of Bishops, priests, seminarians, and men and women religious from the whole world, I think of the Psalmist's words from today's Mass: "Let the peoples praise you, O God" (*Ps* 66). We are indeed here to praise the Lord, and we do so reaffirming our desire to be his instruments so that not only some peoples may praise God, but all. With the same *parrhesia* of Paul and Barnabas, we want to proclaim the Gospel to our young people, so that they may encounter Christ and build a more fraternal world. I wish to reflect with you on three aspects of our vocation: we are called by God, called to proclaim the Gospel, and called to promote the culture of encounter.

1. *Called by God* – I believe that it is important to rekindle constantly an awareness of our divine vocation, which we often take for granted in the midst of our many daily responsibilities: as Jesus says, "You did not choose me, but I chose you" (*Jn* 15:16). This means returning to the source of our calling. For this reason, a Bishop, a priest, a consecrated person, a seminarian cannot be "forgetful": it would mean losing the vital link to that first moment of our journey. Ask for the grace, ask the Virgin for the grace, she who had a good memory; ask for the grace to preserve the memory of this first call. We were called by God and we were called to be with Jesus (cf. *Mk* 3:14),

united with him. In reality, this living, this abiding in Christ marks all that we are and all that we do. It is precisely this “life in Christ” that ensures our apostolate is effective, that our service is fruitful: “I appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit be authentic ” (cf. *Jn* 15:16). It is not creativity, however pastoral it may be, or meetings or planning that ensure our fruitfulness, even if these are greatly helpful. But what assures our fruitfulness is our being faithful to Jesus, who says insistently: “Abide in me and I in you” (*Jn* 15:4). And we know well what that means: to contemplate him, to worship him, to embrace him, in our daily encounter with him in the Eucharist, in our life of prayer, in our moments of adoration; it means to recognize him present and to embrace him in those most in need. “Being with” Christ does not mean isolating ourselves from others. Rather, it is a “being with” in order to go forth and encounter others. Here I wish to recall some words of Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta. She said: “We must be very proud of our vocation because it gives us the opportunity to serve Christ in the poor. It is in the *favelas*, ... in the *villas miseria*, that one must go to seek and to serve Christ. We must go to them as the priest presents himself at the altar, with joy” (*Mother’s Instructions*, I, p. 80). Jesus is the Good Shepherd; he is our true treasure. Please, let us not erase Jesus from our lives! Let us ground our hearts ever more in him (cf. *Lk* 12:34).

2. *Called to proclaim the Gospel* – Many of you, dear Bishops and priests, if not all, have accompanied your young people to World Youth Day. They too have heard the mandate of Jesus: “Go and make disciples of all nations” (cf. *Mt* 28:19). It is our responsibility as Pastors to help kindle within their hearts the desire to be missionary disciples of Jesus. Certainly, this invitation could cause many to feel somewhat afraid, thinking that to be missionaries requires leaving their own homes and countries, family and friends. God asks us to be missionaries. But where – where he himself places us, in our own countries or wherever he chosen for us. Let us help the young. Let us have an attentive ear to listen to their dreams – they need to be heard – to listen to their successes, to pay attention to their difficulties. You have to sit down and listen to the same *libretto*, but accompanied by diverse music, with different characteristics. Having the patience to listen! I ask this of you with all my heart! In the confessional, in spiritual direction, in accompanying. Let us find ways to spend time with them. Planting seeds is demanding and very tiring, very tiring! It is much more rewarding to enjoy the harvest! How cunning! Reaping is more enjoyable for us! But Jesus asks us to sow with care and responsibility.

Let us spare no effort in the formation of our young people! Saint Paul uses an expression that he embodied in his own life, when he addressed the Christian community: “My little children, with whom I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you” (*Gal* 4:19). Let us embody this also in our own ministry! To help our young people to discover the courage and joy of faith, the joy of being loved personally by God, is very difficult. But when young people understand it, when young people experience it through the anointing of the Holy Spirit, this “being personally loved by God” accompanies them for the rest of their lives. They rediscover the joy that God gave his Son Jesus for our salvation. Let us form them in mission, to go out, to go forth, to be itinerants who communicate the faith. Jesus did this with his own disciples: he did not keep them under his wing

like a hen with her chicks. He sent them out! We cannot keep ourselves shut up in parishes, in our communities, in our parish or diocesan institutions, when so many people are waiting for the Gospel! To go out as ones sent. It is not enough simply to open the door in welcome because they come, but we must go out through that door to seek and meet the people! Let us urge our young people to go forth. Of course, they will make mistakes, but let us not be afraid! The Apostles made mistakes before us. Let us urge them to go forth. Let us think resolutely about pastoral needs, beginning on the outskirts, with those who are farthest away, with those who do not usually go to church. They are the VIPs who are invited. Go and search for them at the crossroads.

3. To be called by Jesus, to be called to evangelize, and third: to be *Called to promote the culture of encounter* – In many places, generally speaking, due to the economic humanism that has been imposed in the world, the culture of exclusion, of rejection, is spreading. There is no place for the elderly or for the unwanted child; there is no time for that poor person in the street. At times, it seems that for some people, human relations are regulated by two modern “dogmas”: efficiency and pragmatism. Dear Bishops, priests, religious and you, seminarians who are preparing for ministry: have the courage to go against the tide of this culture. Be courageous! Remember this, which helps me a great deal and on which I meditate frequently: take the First Book of Maccabees, and recall how many of the people wanted to adapt to the culture of the time: “No ...! Leave us alone! Let us eat of everything, like the others do... Fine, yes to the Law, but not every part of it ...”. And they ended up abandoning the faith and placing themselves in the current of that culture. Have the courage to go against the tide of this culture of efficiency, this culture of waste. Encountering and welcoming everyone, solidarity – a word that is being hidden by this culture, as if it were a bad word – solidarity and fraternity: these are what make our society truly human.

Be servants of communion and of the culture of encounter! I would like you to be almost obsessed about this. Be so without being presumptuous, imposing “our truths”, but rather be guided by the humble yet joyful certainty of those who have been found, touched and transformed by the Truth who is Christ, ever to be proclaimed (cf. *Lk 24:13-35*).

Dear brothers and sisters, God calls us, by name and surname, each one of us, to proclaim the Gospel and to promote the culture of encounter with joy. The Virgin Mary is our exemplar. In her life she was “a model of that motherly love with which all who join in the Church’s apostolic mission for the regeneration of humanity should be animated” (Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, 65). Let us ask her to teach us to encounter one another in Jesus every day. And when we pretend not to notice because we have many things to do and the tabernacle is abandoned, may she take us by the hand. Let us ask this of her! Watch over me, Mother, when I am disoriented, and lead me by the hand. May you spur us on to meet our many brothers and sisters who are on the outskirts, who are hungry for God but have no one to proclaim him. May you not force us out of our homes, but encourage us to go out so that we may be disciples of the Lord. May you grant all of us this grace.

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