



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY
OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA
ON THE OCCASION OF THE 6th ASIAN YOUTH DAY
(13-18 AUGUST 2014)

MEETING WITH THE ASIAN YOUTH

ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS Shrine of Solmoe

Friday, 15 August 2014

[Video](#)

Dear Young Friends,

“It is good for us to be here!” (Mt 17:4). These words were spoken by Saint Peter on Mount Tabor as he stood in the presence of Jesus transfigured in glory. Truly it is good for us to be here, together, at this shrine of the Korean Martyrs, in whom the Lord’s glory was revealed at the dawn of the Church’s life in this country. In this great assembly, which brings together young Christians from throughout Asia, we can almost feel the glory of Jesus present in our midst, present in his Church which embraces every nation, language and people, present in the power of his Holy Spirit who makes all things new, young and alive!

I thank you for your warm welcome: your very warm welcome! I also thank you for the gift of your enthusiasm, your joyful songs, your testimonies of faith, and your beautiful expressions of the variety and richness of your different cultures. In a special way, I thank Mai, John and Marina, the three young people who shared with me your hopes, your problems and concerns; I listened to them carefully, and I will keep them in mind. I thank Bishop Lazzaro You Heung-sik for his words of introduction and I greet all of you from my heart.

This afternoon I would like to reflect with you on part of the theme of this Sixth Asian Youth Day:

“The Glory of the Martyrs Shines on You”. Just as the Lord made his glory shine forth in the heroic witness of the martyrs, so too he wants to make his glory shine in your lives, and through you, to light up the life of this vast continent. Today Christ is knocking at the door of your heart, of my heart. He calls you and me to rise, to be wide awake and alert, and to see the things in life that really matter. What is more, he is asking you and me to go out on the highways and byways of this world, knocking on the doors of other people’s hearts, inviting them to welcome him into their lives.

This great gathering of Asian young people also allows us to see something of what the Church herself is meant to be in God’s eternal plan. Together with young people everywhere, you want to help build a world where we all live together in peace and friendship, overcoming barriers, healing divisions, rejecting violence and prejudice. And this is exactly what God wants for us. The Church is meant to be a seed of unity for the whole human family. In Christ, all nations and peoples are called to a unity which does not destroy diversity but acknowledges, reconciles and enriches it.

How distant the spirit of the world seems from that magnificent vision and plan! How often the seeds of goodness and hope which we try to sow seem to be choked by weeds of selfishness, hostility and injustice, not only all around us, but also in our own hearts. We are troubled by the growing gap in our societies between rich and poor. We see signs of an idolatry of wealth, power and pleasure which come at a high cost to human lives. Closer to home, so many of our own friends and contemporaries, even in the midst of immense material prosperity, are suffering from spiritual poverty, loneliness and quiet despair. God seems to be removed from the picture. It is almost as though a spiritual desert is beginning to spread throughout our world. It affects the young too, robbing them of hope and even, in all too many cases, of life itself.

Yet this is the world into which you are called to go forth and bear witness to the Gospel of hope, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and the promise of his Kingdom – this is your theme, Marina, and I will speak about it shortly. In the parables, Jesus tells us that the Kingdom comes into the world quietly, growing silently yet surely wherever it is welcomed by hearts open to its message of hope and salvation. The Gospel teaches us that the Spirit of Jesus can bring new life to every human heart and can transform every situation, even the most apparently hopeless. Jesus can transform all situations! This is the message which you are called to share with your contemporaries: at school, in the workplace, in your families, your universities and your communities. Because Jesus rose from the dead, we know that he has “the words of eternal life” (*Jn 6:68*), that his word has the power to touch every heart, to conquer evil with good, and to change and redeem the world.

Dear young friends, in this generation the Lord is counting on you! He is counting on you! He entered your hearts on the day of your Baptism; he gave you his Spirit on the day of your Confirmation; and he strengthens you constantly by his presence in the Eucharist, so that you can be his witnesses before the world. Are you ready to say “yes”? [Yes!] Are you ready? [Yes!] Thank you! Are you tired? [No!] Really? [Yes!]

A good friend of mine told me yesterday: “You cannot speak to the young with paper; you must speak and address young people spontaneously, from the heart”. But I have a great difficulty: I have poor English! [No!, No!] Yes, Yes! But if you wish, I can say other things spontaneously. [Yes!] Are you tired? [No!] May I go on? [Yes!] But I will do so in Italian. [to the interpreter] Will you translate? Thank you.

What Marina said really struck me: about the conflict she felt in her life. What to do in this situation? Take up the path of consecrated life, religious life, or study to be better able to help others.

This is only an apparent conflict, because when the Lord calls, he always does so for the good of others, whether it is through the religious life, the consecrated life, or as a lay person, as the father or mother of a family. The goal is the same: to worship God and to do good to others. What should Marina do, and the many others of you who are asking the same question? I once asked it myself: What path should I choose? But you do not have to choose any path! The Lord must choose it! Jesus has chosen it! You have to listen to him and ask: Lord, what should I do?

This is the prayer that a young person should make: “Lord what do you want from me?” With prayer and the advice of some good friends – laity, priests, religious sisters, bishops, popes (even the Pope can offer some good advice!) – you can find the path that the Lord wants for you.

Let us pray together! [to the interpreter: Have them repeat in Korean: Lord, what do you want from my life? Three times.] Let us pray!

I am sure that the Lord will listen to you. And to you, Marina, I am sure of it! Thank you for your witness. [...] Sorry! I got the name wrong: the question was asked by Mai, not by Marina!

Mai spoke about something else too: martyrs, saints and witness. She told us with some sadness and nostalgia about her homeland, Cambodia. There are still no saints there, but let us hope... Saints there are, and many of them! But the Church has not yet recognized, beatified or canonized any of them. I thank you very much, Mai, for expressing this. I promise that, when return I home, I will speak to the person in charge of these things, he is a good man by the name of Angelo – he is a good man, this Angelo – and I will ask him to study this matter so as to move it along. Thank you!

It is time to finish. Are you tired? [No!] Shall I go on a little? [Yes!]

Then let us turn to Marina. Marina proposed two questions... not so much two questions as two reflections and a question about happiness. She told us something very true: you cannot purchase happiness. Whenever you buy happiness, you soon realize that it has vanished: The happiness you buy does not last. Only the happiness of love is the kind that lasts.

The path of love is simple: love God and love your neighbor, your brother or sister, the one at your side, who needs love and so many other things. “But Father, how do I know that I love God?” Only if you love your neighbor, if you do not hate your neighbor and do not harbor hatred in your heart, do you love God. This is the sure proof.

And then Marina went on to ask a question, one which I understand. It is a painful question and I thank her for asking it: the division of brothers and sisters in the Koreas. Are there two Koreas? No, there is only one, but it is divided; the family is divided. This pain exists... How can we help the family to be reunited? I would say these two things: first, a word of advice, and then, a word of hope.

First, my advice is to pray; to pray for our brothers and sisters in the North: “Lord, we are one family, help us. Help us to be united. You can do it. Let there not be winners and losers but only one family, only brothers and sisters”. Now I invite you all to pray together – after the translation – in silence, for the unity of the two Koreas. In silence let us pray. [silence]

Now, a word of hope. What is hope? There are so many forms of hope, but here is one which is really beautiful! Korea is one; it is a family. You all speak the same language, the language of one family; you are brothers and sisters who speak the same language. [In the Bible,] when the brothers of Joseph went down to Egypt to buy some food – they were hungry, they had money, but they had nothing to eat – they went there to buy food and they found a brother! How? Because Joseph realized that they spoke his language. Think about your brothers and sisters in the North: they speak the same language and when a same language is spoken in a family, there is room for hope.

Just now we saw something beautiful, that sketch of the prodigal son, the son who left home, spent all his money, everything he had, betrayed his father and his family, betrayed everything. At a certain moment, out of necessity, but full of shame, he decided to return. He thought about how he would ask for his father’s forgiveness. He thought he would say: “Father, I have sinned, I have done all these wrong things, so I want to be your servant, not your son”, and lots of other fine things.

But the Gospel tells us that the father saw his son coming from afar. Why did he see him? Because every day he used to go out onto the terrace to see if his son would return. The father embraced him: he did not let his son speak; he did not let him say all that he had rehearsed, and he did not allow him to even ask for forgiveness. Then he went off to organize a party. This is the party that God enjoys: whenever we return home, whenever we return to him. “But Father, I am a sinful man, a sinful woman...”. All the better, he is waiting for you! All the better, and he will throw a party! Jesus himself tells us that there will be more celebration in heaven over one sinner who turns back than for a hundred of the righteous who remain at home.

None of us knows what life will bring us. And you, dear young friends, are asking: “What is in store for me?” We are capable of doing bad things, very bad things, but please, do not despair: the Father is always there waiting for us! Come back! Come back! This is the word: Come back! Come back home because the Father is waiting for me. And if I am a great sinner, he will celebrate the more. And you priests, please, embrace sinners and be merciful.

To hear this is something beautiful. It is something that brings me great happiness, to know that God never tires of forgiving; he never tires of waiting for us.

I had written three suggestions but I have talked about them: prayer, the Eucharist, and helping others, for the poor.

Now it is time for me to go. I look forward to seeing you in these days and speaking to you again when we gather for Holy Mass on Sunday. For now, let us thank the Lord for the blessings of this time together and ask him for the strength to be faithful and joyful witnesses of his love throughout Asia and the entire world.

May Mary, our Mother, watch over you and keep you ever close to Jesus her Son. And from his place in heaven, may Saint [John Paul II](#), who initiated the [World Youth Days](#), always be your guide. With great affection I give you my blessing. And please, pray for me, don't forget: pray for me! Thank you very much!