



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO THE COMMUNITY OF THE INTERNATIONAL COLLEGE OF THE GESÙ, IN ROME

*Consistory Hall
Monday, 3 December 2018*

[Multimedia]

Dear Brothers, Good morning!

Thank you for your visit, I am pleased. This year you are commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Collegio del Gesù, opened thanks to the initiative of Fr Arrupe in 1968. In the 50th year, that of the jubilee, Scripture says that “each of you shall return to his property and each of you shall return to his family” (Lev 25:10). But no one needs to pack their bags! All of you, however, are called to return to the ‘place’ that is your own, to “desire what is essential and original” (Saint Peter Favre, *Memoriale*, 63), to revisit that family in which God recreated you, where you professed your belonging to him. God established you as Jesuits: this jubilee is a moment of grace to remember and feel that you are with the Church, in a Society and in a membership that have a name: Jesus. To remember means to establish yourself anew in Jesus, in his life. It means to re-emphasize a clear ‘no’ to the temptation to live for oneself; to reaffirm that, like Jesus, we exist for the Father (cf. Jn 6:57); that, like Jesus, we must live to serve, not to be served (cf. Mk 10:45). To remember means to repeat with one’s intelligence and will that the Lord’s Easter is sufficient for the life of a Jesuit. Nothing else is needed. It will do you good to return to the second week of the *Exercises*, in order to ground yourself once more on the life of Jesus, on the journey toward Easter. Because to be formed is above all to ground oneself. Allow me to advise you on this, to revisit the Colloquium on service in order to be like Jesus, to imitate Jesus, who emptied himself, annihilated himself, obedient unto death; the Colloquium that guides you up to the moment of asking insistently for slander, persecution, humiliation. This is the criterion, brothers! If someone does not succeed in this, speak about it with your spiritual father. Imitate Jesus. Like him, on that path which Paul recommends in Philippians 2:7, and do not be afraid to ask for it, because it is a beatitude! “Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you

falsely...". This is your path: if you do not succeed in having that heartfelt Colloquium and in giving your entire life, with conviction, and in asking for this, you will not be firmly rooted.

Thus, *to ground yourself* is the first verb I would like to give you. Saint Francis Xavier, whom we are celebrating today, wrote about this: "I implore you, in all your matters, to ground yourselves totally in God" (*Letter 90 from Kagoshima*). In this way, he added, there is no adversity for which one cannot be prepared. You live in the house where Saint Ignatius lived, wrote the Constitutions, and sent the first companions on mission throughout the world. You are grounded on the origins. It is the grace of these years in Rome: the grace of the foundation, the grace of the origins. And you are a seedbed that leads the world to Rome and Rome to the world, the Society in the heart of the Church and the Church in the heart of the Society.

The second verb is *to grow*. You are called in these years to grow, establishing roots. The plant grows from the roots, which are unseen but support the whole. And it ceases to bear fruit not when it has few branches, but when the roots dry up. To have roots is to have a well grafted heart, which in God is able to expand. To God, *semper maior*, one responds with the *magis* of life, with limpid and unbridled enthusiasm, with the fire that blazes within, with that positive, ever-growing tension, which says 'no' to every compromise. It is Saint Paul's "woe to me if I do not preach the gospel" (1 Cor 9:16), and Saint Francis Xavier's "I did not stop for one instant" (*Letter 20 to Saint Ignatius*), and is what spurred Saint Alberto Hurtado to be a sharp arrow in the lethargic limbs of the Church. If the heart does not expand, it atrophies. Do not forget this. If one does not grow, one withers.

There is no growth without crisis — do not be afraid of crises, do not be afraid —, just as there is no fruit without pruning nor victory without struggle. To grow, to put down roots means to struggle without respite against all spiritual worldliness, which is the worst evil that can befall us, as Fr de Lubac used to say. If worldliness damages the roots, goodbye fruit and goodbye plant. And I think this is the most formidable danger at this time: spiritual worldliness, which leads one to clericalism and so forth. However, if growth is a constant *acting against* one's own ego, there will be much fruit. And while the enemy spirit will not give up tempting you to seek your 'consolations', by insinuating that you live better if you have what you want, the friendly Spirit will gently encourage you in goodness, to grow in humble docility, moving forward, without rifts and without dissatisfaction, with that serenity that comes from God alone.

Someone who has wicked thoughts might say: 'But this is pelagianism!'. No, this is in comparison with Christ Crucified, with whom you will have the aforementioned colloquy, because only with the Lord's grace can one proceed along this path.

I would like to mention two positive signs of growth, *freedom* and *obedience*: two virtues that advance if they proceed together. Freedom is essential, because "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (2 Cor 3:17). The Spirit of God freely speaks to each person through feelings and thoughts; he cannot be confined to tables, but is to be welcomed with the heart, on the

journey, as free children, not as servants. I hope you are free children who, united in diversity, struggle each day to achieve the greatest freedom: freedom from yourselves. Prayer will be of great help to you; prayer must never be neglected: it is the legacy that Fr Arrupe left us at the end: Arrupe's 'swan's song'. Read that appeal, that conference that he gave to Jesuits in the refugee camp in Thailand. Then he took the airplane and landed in Rome, where he suffered a stroke. And freedom goes with obedience: as it was for Jesus, for us too the food of life is doing the will of the Father (cf. Jn 4:34), and of the fathers whom the Church gives us. Free and obedient, after the example of Saint Ignatius who, when he had a long wait at Villa d'Este and, meek while at the same time decisive, in full freedom, presented to the Pope the Society's total obedience, in a Church that certainly did not shine through evangelical customs. Therein lies the snapshot of the adult, fully grown Jesuit. Freedom and obedience give life to that way of working creatively with the Superior. I once said to a group of Jesuits who were preparing — I think — to become superiors, that the General of the Society was a shepherd of 'a flock of toads', because the freedom of Jesuits, along with initiative, leads to many initiatives and the poor Superior has to go from one side to the other.... To create unity not with meek sheep, but with toads! And this is true; it is important. But where is the guarantee of this bond with the Superior, of this unity? In the examination of conscience. Please never neglect this, because it is what enables the Superior to govern this 'flock of toads', to lead them to a different harmony, because he knows you and tomorrow it will be you to receive his account, because we are all brothers who know each other well. Freedom, obedience, examination of conscience as the method, as the way.

To ground oneself, to grow, and lastly, *to mature*. This is the third verb. One does not mature in the roots and trunk, but in the output of fruit, which fertilize the soil with new seeds. Here mission comes into play, putting yourself face-to-face with today's situations, taking care of the world that God loves. Saint [Paul VI](#) said: "Wherever in the Church, even in the most difficult and extreme fields, at the crossroads of ideologies, in the social trenches, there has been and there is confrontation between the burning exigencies of man and the perennial message of the Gospel, here also there have been, and there are, Jesuits" ([Address of the occasion of the 32nd General Congregation of the Society of Jesus, 3 December 1974](#)). These words are what I think have been, perhaps, the most profound message from a Pope to the Society. In the most intricate intersections, in the borderlands, in the deserts of humanity: here is where the Jesuit is called to be. One may be as a sheep among wolves, but one must not fight the wolves; one must only remain a sheep. In this way the Shepherd will reach that place, where his sheep is (cf. Saint John Chrysostom, *Homily 33 on the Gospel of Matthew*).

Passion and discipline in studies contribute to this mission. And it will always do you good to pair the *ministry of consolation* with the *ministry of the Word*. There you touch the flesh that the Word took on: by caressing the suffering limbs of Christ, familiarity with the Word Incarnate grows. May the sufferings you see not frighten you. Place them before the Crucifix. Take them there and to the Eucharist where one draws the patient love that is able to embrace the crucifixes of every age. Thus patience matures as well, along with hope, because they are twins: they grow together. Do

not be afraid to weep in contact with harsh situations: they are drops that irrigate life, render it docile. Tears of compassion purify the heart and feelings.

Looking at you, I see an international community, called to grow and mature together. The Collegio del Gesù is and must be an active training ground in the art of living by including the other. It is not just a matter of understanding and loving each other, but of bearing one another's burdens (cf. Gal 6:2). And not only the burdens of mutual frailty, but of the different backgrounds, cultures, of the peoples' memories. It will do you so much good to share and discover the joys and real problems of the world through the presence of the brother who is beside you; embrace in him not only what is interesting or fascinating, but the worries and hopes of a Church and of a people: extend the borders, by moving the horizon each time, always a little bit further away. May the blessing that I give you also reach your countries and may it be a help for you in order to ground yourselves, to grow and mature for the greater glory of God. I thank you and I ask you to pray for me. Thank you.