



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE **BOLLETTINO**

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Audience with the Shalom Catholic Community

The following is the Holy Father's extemporaneous address to the members of the Shalom Catholic Community, received in audience yesterday morning in the Paul VI Hall:

Holy Father's Address

Many thanks for your testimony. I asked if I could speak in Spanish (audience: "Yes!") instead of Italian, so I can express myself better. But if I speak in Spanish, I can speak a bit of Italian and a bit of Spanish together, so in that way in Spanish we can get by.

Juan, you found the meaning of your life in prayer, in fraternal life in the community and in evangelisation, is that right? Praying, sharing and evangelising, you realised that your life has meaning. Notice that the three verbs you used to explain this are verbs of movement: to come out of yourself. You came out of yourself in prayer to meet God; you came out of yourself to share in fraternity, to encounter your brothers; and you came out of yourself to evangelise, to bring good news. And the good news – you used the word – is mercy, in a world marked by despair and indifference. It is curious: mercy is absolute. You cannot merely speak about mercy, you have to bear witness to it, share it, teach it by coming out of yourself. When we speak of mercy we must put it into practice: this witness does not mean staying wrapped up in yourself or in your own interests, but rather going out. To go out in search of God. It is not easy to look for God, it is all a journey. To go out, sharing with others, not playing at being the privileged "baby" to whom everyone gives toys, all for him – going out to tell others that God is good, that God is waiting for you in the worst moments of your life. And this is perhaps the message of mercy that one can give, isn't it? Remember the Gospel passage of the son who returns home. In Luke chapter 15 there is a phrase that says the father saw him coming from afar. He had left a few years earlier, which caused him to spend all the money he had. He saw him coming from afar. This makes me think that this father, every day and perhaps all the time, went up on the terrace to see if his son was returning. And so God is with us, even in the worst moments of sin, even in difficult moments. And the Gospel continues: "And the father saw him and felt compassion", using a verb that in Hebrew means "his viscera stirred", the paternal and maternal viscera of God – and he went running towards him and embraced him. This son was in the worst of sins, the worst of

situations, and when he said “I will arise and go to my father”, his father was already waiting for him. This is mercy, it never despairs. Moreover, it seems that our God has a special predilection for sinners, even those of pureblood: he awaits them. So I would suggest that you keep on coming out of yourself and making others understand that there is always a Father who awaits with affection and tenderness the first step that we choose to take. This is what I needed to say to you. Thank you.

Justine, you received baptism during the Jubilee of Mercy, how nice! You realised that finding God led you to strip away from yourself, to move away from being centred on yourself, and to go out towards the joy of living for God and according to God. One of the things – here you are all young, including those who are young for the second time! All young, second-stage young people – one of the things that characterises youth and the eternal youth of God, because God is eternally young, is joy. Joy is the opposite of sadness, a sadness that is precisely what you have left behind. You came out of something that caused sadness, which means being focused on yourself, self-centredness. A young person who looks only at himself, who lives only for himself, ends up satiated with self-centredness, that is, full of self-centredness. There is an image that comes to mind: this culture that we must live, how selfish it is, how it looks at itself... it has a large dose of narcissism, of this contemplation of the self, and therefore of ignoring others. Narcissism produces sadness because you live with the worry of “beautifying” your soul every day, to appear better than you are, of contemplating whether you are more beautiful than others; it is mirror sickness. Young people, break the mirror! Do not look at yourselves in the mirror, because the mirror deceives: look outwards, look at others, escape from this world, from this culture we are living in – to which you referred – which is consumerist and narcissistic. And if you ever want to look in the mirror, let me give you some advice: look in the mirror to laugh at yourselves! Try this out one day: look at yourself and laugh at what you see, your soul will be refreshed. Know how to laugh at yourselves, this gives us joy and saves us from the temptation of narcissism. Thank you, Justine.

Mateus, you spoke Portuguese, Brazilian. I would like to ask you a question: who was better, Pele or Maradona? [Laughter and applause from the participants]. For a long time you were trapped in the tunnel of drug use, and it is one of the tools that the culture we experience uses to dominate us, and it is, on the other hand, like a need we have to become minute, invisible to ourselves, as if we were made of air. Drugs cause us to deny all the roots we have, our bodily roots, our historical roots, our problematic roots, all that keeps us rooted. It removes your root and makes you live in a world without roots, uprooted from everything. Uprooted from plans, uprooted from the present, uprooted from your past, your history, uprooted from your homeland, your family, your love, everything. You live in a world without any root, and this is the tragedy of drug abuse. Young people, entirely uprooted, without real commitments, that is, without true bodily commitments because, with drugs, you do not even feel your own body. And after passing through this experience of invisibility, and after becoming conscious again, you became aware of all the roots you have in your heart. I ask every one of you: are you aware of the real roots you have in your heart, are you aware of the creative capacity you have, are you aware that you are poets in this universe, to create new and beautiful things? Coming out of drug abuse is becoming aware of this, to ask the questions I have just asked. And each one of you, ask yourself: Am I aware of having my feet on the ground, with all that means in terms of historical and social roots, of the roots of wisdom, of love, of plans, of creative capacity? And you want to correspond to God’s plan, and you realise that for you it means consoling the sufferings of humanity, and you say that it is on this synodal path that you wish to discern your vocation. And in this synodal path we must all discern our vocation – as you said – to see what the Lord has to say to us with a view to a mission. I wish to say only one word to you, which is not mine: give freely. If you are here, if we are here, it is because we were brought here freely. Please, give freely what we have received. Give freely what we have received. And giving freely fills your soul, it values you, it makes you generous, it teaches you to embrace and to smile, it makes you dream, it frees you of self-interest. Give freely and freely you will receive, it is the teaching that He invites us to give. [Reply with a weak “yes”]. Oh, my God, what is this? it seems that instead of encouraging you I have given you a sedative to make you sleep! [Applause].

And the most adult, the most mature of the Shalom Community, what must you do, what service is asked of you today by this world, this charism, this community, what service? They have something – this is nice – the most elderly and the youngest: the service that is asked of you is dialogue, dialogue between you, to pass the torch, to pass on the legacy, to pass the charism, to pass on your inner experience. But I would like to go beyond that, and one of the challenges that today’s world asks of us is dialogue between the young and the elderly, and in this I rely on your testimony: “Yes Father, we have already heard you say this”. And you will hear me say it

several more times: dialogue between young and old. The young need to listen to the elderly and the elderly need to listen to the young. "And I, what must I do?", a young person might ask: "What am I supposed to do, listen to an old person, how boring is that going to be?". I have experience of seeing this many times in the other diocese: to go with a group of young people, for example, to a rest home to play the guitar with the elderly. Good, they play the guitar and then the dialogue begins. It is spontaneous, it arises by itself, and the young people do not want to leave it at that because wisdom comes from the elderly, a wisdom that reaches their heart and inspires them to go on. The elderly, for you young people, are not to be kept in the closet, the elderly are not to be kept hidden, the elderly are waiting for a young person to go to them and to let them speak, to let them dream. And you, young people, need to receive from these men and these women these dreams, these illusions that revive them. This will be my response to the experience that the most elderly, in dialogue with the youngest of the Shalom Movement, must make. To teach and to help in dialogue between young and old. "Yes, I speak with my mother and my father". No, your father and mother are not elderly. Speak with your grandfather and your grandmother, or rather, one generation removed, they have the wisdom and moreover they need to reach your heart to give you their wisdom. And this will be the advice I give you, to encourage this dialogue: this dialogue is a promise for the future, this dialogue will help you go ahead. I don't know if this answers your question [Moisés answers: "Yes"]. Very good, thank you.

I don't know how the programme continues but I still have a doubt at the end of the last question on the dialogue between young and old. Is Moisés young or old? [Answer: *I am like you, Holy. Father, I am like you*].

HYMN – BLESSING OF THE HOLY FATHER

And please, I ask you, do not forget to pray for me. Thank you.
