SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE
BOLLETTINO

HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIÈGE PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS
OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE SALA DE IMPRENSA DA SANTA SÉ
BIURO PRASOWE STOLICY APOSTOLSKIEJ دار الصحافة التابعة للكرسي الرسولي

N. 220423b

Saturday 23.04.2022

Audience with participants in the Sixth Youth Missionary Convention

The Holy Father Francis has received in audience the participants in the Sixth Youth Missionary Convention, organized by the “Missio” Foundation of the Italian Episcopal Conference, taking place from 22 to 25 April 2022 at the Fraterna Domus of Sacrofano, Rome.

The following is the Pope’s address to those present at the audience:

Address of the Holy Father

Your Excellencies, dear brothers and sisters, good morning and welcome!

I thank the national secretary for the words he addressed to me on behalf of you all. Thank you!

You have come from different areas of Italy for the Youth Missionary Convention, on the theme “Back to the COMIGI: The mission starts again from the future”. It is an appointment organized in collaboration with the Missionary Institutes, which qualifies your formative itinerary, inviting you to renew together your commitment to the universal mission of the Church. This year is also a valuable occasion to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the birth of the Missionary Youth Movement of the Pontifical Mission Societies, today known as “Missio Giovani”.

It is an important anniversary for you young missionaries: an opportunity to remember what was at the basis of the birth of this Movement. And from the rereading of its history and in fidelity to it you will find the impetus for a new missionary zeal, to be lived day after day. The mission is like this: day by day, it is not once and for all, no: it must be lived every day.

That is why I would like to give you three verbs, very easy to remember, that I believe are fundamental for the mission today, especially for young people. I find them in three passages of the New Testament in which Jesus and the disciples are in action. These verbs are: *arise*, *care* and *witness*. They express three very precise

movements, which I hope will sustain your journey into the future.

The first verb - *arise* – is from the episode of the Gospel of Luke in which Jesus restores life to the son of the widow of Nain (7: 11-17). Only Luke, who is very attentive to the motions of the human soul and, in particular, of women, records this episode. Reading the text, one is impressed by its dynamics: Jesus arrives in this town and sees that there is a funeral procession leaving the town; a widowed mother accompanies the coffin of her son to the burial place; the evangelist notes:

“And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said to her, ‘Do not weep’” (v. 13). He approached the mother and said: “Do not weep!”. This is what we say when we go to funerals: “Do not weep”. But Jesus said it to start an action. He is interested in the pain of the least among us, Jesus is interested in the pain of those who suffer, often in a composed and dignified way, of those who have lost hope, of those who no longer see a future. The death of a son, in that circumstance, meant the loss of everything. Jesus approaches the coffin and touches it. He does not care if this contact can make him impure, as the Law said. He has come to save those who are in darkness and in the shadow of death. Then he says, “Young man, I say to you, arise” (v. 14). This is the verb: “Arise!”. Let us imagine: in front of the coffin of this boy, a boy like you: “I say to you, arise!”. Giving life back to this boy means giving the future back to his mother and to the whole community.

These words of Jesus are still echoing in the hearts of many young people today, and to each one he addresses an invitation: “I say to you, arise!” This is the first meaning of the mission on which I invite you to reflect: Jesus gives us the strength to arise, and asks us to escape the death of selfishness, the paralysis of selfishness, laziness and superficiality. These paralyses are everywhere. And they are the ones that block us and make us live a museum faith, not a strong faith, a faith more dead than alive. Jesus, for this reason, to resolve this bad attitude, says: “Arise!”. “Arise!”, to be relaunched towards a future of life, full of hope and charity towards our brothers and sisters. The mission restarts when we take seriously the word of the Lord Jesus: *arise*!

Another aspect linked to the first is found in the famous passage of the Good Samaritan (cf. *Lk* 10: 25-37). Yet again the evangelist is Luke. A doctor of the Law asks Jesus: “Who is my neighbour?”, and Jesus responds with the parable of the Good Samaritan: a man goes down from Jerusalem towards Jericho and along the way is robbed and beaten by brigands, and is left half dead at the roadside.

Unlike two ministers of worship, who see him but walk on by, a Samaritan, that is, a stranger to the Jews of the time, who did not have much friendship with them, stops and takes care of him. And he does so intelligently: he gives him first aid to the extent that he can, then he takes him to an inn and pays the owner so that he can be looked after for the next few days. A few brushstrokes to describe another aspect of the mission, namely the second verb: *to care*. That is, to live charity in a dynamic and intelligent way. Today we need people, especially young people, who have eyes to see the needs of the weakest and a big heart that makes them capable of spending themselves totally.

You too are called upon to use your skills and to put your intelligence at the service of organizing charity with wide-ranging projects. Today it is your turn, but you are not the first! How many “Good Samaritan” missionaries have lived the mission by caring for their wounded brothers and sisters along the way! Following in their footsteps, with a style and manner suited to our times, it is now your turn to carry out a discreet and effective charity, an imaginative and intelligent charity, not episodic but continuous over time, capable of accompanying people on their journey of healing and growth. This is the second verb I give you: to *take care* of your brothers and sisters. Without selfishness, in service, in order to help.

Finally, a third essential aspect of the mission is found in an episode from the Acts of the Apostles, which is well suited to the Easter season we are living. Indeed, after his resurrection, Jesus showed himself to his disciples for forty days. He did so to explain to them the mystery of his death, to forgive them for fleeing at the time of trial, but above all to encourage them to be his witnesses throughout the world. Jesus says: “You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth” (*Acts* 1:8).

Every Christian, baptized in water and the Holy Spirit, is called to live as if immersed in an everlasting Easter and therefore to live as a risen man. Do not live like a dead person, live as a risen one! This gift is not for us alone, but is meant to be shared with all. The mission cannot but be motivated by the enthusiasm of finally being able to share this happiness with others. A beautiful and enriching experience of faith, which also knows how to deal with life's inevitable resistance, becomes almost naturally convincing. When someone tells the Gospel with his or her own life, it breaks through even the hardest hearts. That is why I entrust to you the last verb of the Christian missionary: *bear witness* with your life. And the one who does not bear witness with his life, who pretends... is like someone who has a few cheques in his hand but does not sign them. “I'll give you this”: it's useless. To bear witness is to put your signature on your riches, your qualities, your vocation. Please, boys and girls, put your signature, always! Put your heart there.

Do not forget these three verbs: *arise* from your sedentary life, *care* for your brothers and sisters, and *bear witness* to the Gospel of joy. Do you understand? What were the three verbs? [Respond: *arise*, *care*, *bear witness*] Ah, you've learned it! Good.

I will finish with a phrase from Saint Oscar Romero: “The happier a man is, the more the glory of Christ is manifested in him”. I wish for you to be missionaries of joy, missionaries of love. The proclamation must be made with a smile, not with sadness. Saint Paul VI, in the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, towards the end, says that it is a bad thing to see evangelizers who are sad and melancholic: read this. Towards the end, the last two pages: the description of the strong evangelizer, of the missionary, and of those who are sad within themselves, who are incapable of giving life to others. That is why I wish you to be missionaries of joy and love. The proclamation must be made with a smile: but not with a professional smile, or the one used in toothpaste advertising, no, that doesn’t work. That is not necessary. The announcement should be made with a smile, but with a heartfelt smile, and not with sadness. Always share the Good News and you will feel happy. I accompany you with prayer and bless you. And please do not forget to pray for me. Thank you!