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Audience with participants in the “Children’s Train” of the “Courtyard of the Gentiles”

This morning, in the San Damaso Courtyard of the Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the participants in the “Children’s Train”, an initiative of the “Courtyard of the Gentiles”.

The following is the Pope’s dialogue with some of the children:

Dialogue of the Holy Father with children

Boy

Pope Francis, I am Mattia Mordente, and I would like to ask you a question. I know you have visited many countries abroad, especially poor countries, to speak with heads of State and also to pray for those countries, to improve them. In your opinion, which of the countries you have visited has improved the most thanks to you?

Pope Francis

I’ll tell you something: every country has its own peculiarities, and I wonder, what is the richest peculiarity of a country. And you know what the richest peculiarity of a country is? The people. The people are always people, they are the same up to a certain point, but each person is different, distinct, and has his or her own richness, and the thing that impresses me is to see how different populations are rich, with a special wealth for that country. Here too: each one of you has his or her own richness, the richness of the soul. Because the heart of each one of us, the soul of each one of us is not the same as another, no! There are no equal hearts, equal souls, each of us has our own wealth. And this also applies to countries. In the countries I visit, I have always seen special riches: this in a certain way, this in another... It is the beauty of creation. And we have to see it in each one of us. If we learn to see people with the heart, to look with the heart, to feel with the heart, to think with

the heart, we will find this richness of each person, who is different from all others, always beautiful and different. Do you understand?

Boy

Ok, yes.

Pope Francis

You're good, aren't you!

Boy

I am Edgar Murario, child and twin brother of a child also present here. I don't have many things to say to you but I have just one question to ask you: how does it feel to be Pope?

Pope Francis

The important thing, in whatever profession life puts you in, is that you don't stop being yourself, with your own personality. If a person, to enter into a role, or if life has placed him in that role, changes his personality, he becomes an artificial person, and he loses himself. One must always feel things as they come, with authenticity: never, never disguise feelings. So, how do I feel as Pope? Like a person, like each one of you in your own profession, in your own job. Because I too am a person like you, and if I have this role then I must try to fulfil it in the humblest way and according to my personality, as far as possible, without trying to do things that are foreign to what I am. For example, I ask you: "How do you feel, or your twin brother?" – "I feel like this". This is important: do not lose it. Even when a person grows up and finds himself with this role, with this job or another, do not forget that you are *this* person, and do not lose this feeling.

In response to your question: how do I feel with this office, with this service as Pope? I try to be myself, not to take artificial positions. I don't know if this is useful to you.

Boy

Ok, thank you.

Girl

Good morning, Holy Father. I am called Nicole Malizia, and I have a question to ask you. I would like to know: which responsibilities do you feel you have to be Pope, or in any case the most important person in the world?

Pope Francis

Being aware of responsibility is something we should all feel, every one of us. Each one of us has his or her own personality and responsibility. You, now, study, you have the responsibility of studying, you are a student; you have the responsibility of bringing certain things to the family. If we think that each one of us has his or her own responsibility, we are thinking that our life is not for ourselves but for others, and also for service to others, to be close to others. Now I arrive at your question: how do I feel? It is true that it is rather a heavy responsibility at times, because it frightens you. But I try to feel it in the most natural way, because if the Lord has asked this of me, it is because he will give me the strength not to make mistakes, to be careful not to make mistakes. I feel my responsibility as a service, just as you will feel yours as a service to others, to your family, and when you get married, to your family, to everyone. Service: the responsibility of serving others, being of help to others; not being *above others*, like a person who commands, no, no. Like one of the others who, if he or she has the office of commanding, does it like one of us. Do you understand?

Girl

Yes, thank you very much.

Pope Francis

Thank you.

Girl

Good morning. I am Caterina Lastorza. I would like to ask you: is it tiring to be Pope?

Pope Francis

In life, there are always moments of fatigue. Every profession, every job we take on always has a part of effort. We struggle to study, for example, we struggle to hold this office, that one, that other one, that service... And even the Pope has his own labours, doesn't he? The road to bearing labours should be a normal road, like that of every person: each one of us bears his or her own labours, and carries out these labours in a human way, in a normal way. But if you ask me: is the work of a father or a mother too tiresome? No, no. God gives the strength to each one of us to bear our own labours, and it is not something *more*. But it must be done honestly, sincerely and with work, just as dad and mum carry out their role as dad and mum. Do you understand?

Girl

Yes, many thanks.

Boy

Hello, I am called David Murario and I have just one thing to ask you. How do you feel to be so closely in contact with the Creator of the Earth, that is, with God?

Pope Francis

This is a beautiful question, you know? Because in life there is the danger of forgetting God, and not being in contact. "No, but I get by on my own and get things done..." Eh, this road is dangerous! Always, once or twice a day, we must remember that the Lord is with us, that the Lord accompanies us, that the Lord is watching us. And to feel you are being watched over by the Lord is important for going ahead and doing your own work with sincerity and strength. The Lord watches over you too, he watches you and he watches your brother. The Lord is close to every one of us and he watches us, and with this *feeling of the Lord close by* we can go ahead well. But the bad thing is when we do not want to feel the Lord close to us, and our preference is to feel this, or this, or that close by, but to distance the Lord. No. The secret is feeling that the Lord is near. And this accompanies you all your life.

Boy

Ok, thank you. And I wanted to ask you another thing. When you see children with problems, sensory disabilities, how do you feel? Do you go and help them and give them advice, or do you go your own way?

Pope Francis

When we look at a person, we must never feel we are superior to that person. For example, if I look at you and I think of what advice I can give you, this is not good. First, I must listen to you, first I must hear you and then say what comes from the heart. I looked at you, close to your brother, your twin; I look at you and say how you moved there and I thought, "That boy is good. What advice should I give to a good boy? Be humble and thank God that he has given you this strength and this ability". And when I look at children, as you say, who have some limitation, some disability, I think that the Lord has given them other things, other beautiful things. One of the things that, I confess to you, touches my heart is when I am with people who cannot see, and many times, many times they say to me, "Can I look at you?". At the beginning I didn't understand, but then I said, "Yes", and they touched my face with their hands and *looked* at me. What do I see, there? Creativity: a person with a limitation always finds the strength to get round that limitation and this is creativity, a capacity to be creative, which is a challenge to that boy, that girl who has that limitation. And this is to be praised. And you, who do not have limitations, try to be creative too: do not get used to doing things, no, try to be creative, because creativity is what makes us resemble God. Do you understand?

Boy

Yes, thank you.

Ukrainian boy (translation)

I am called Sachar, and I come from Ukraine. I do not have a question, but rather, a request: can you come to Ukraine to save all the children who are suffering there now?

Pope Francis

[Greeting in Ukrainian] I am glad you are here. I think a lot about the children in Ukraine, and this is why I have sent some Cardinals to help there, to be close to all the people, to the children. I would like to go to Ukraine; it is just that I have to wait for the moment to do so, you know? Because it is not easy to make a decision that can cause more harm than good to the world. I must find the right moment to do it. Next week I will receive representatives from the Ukrainian government, who will come to speak, also to speak about an eventual visit of mine there. Let's see what happens.

Boy

Thank you.

Boy

Pope Francis, I would like to ask you two things: you are a football supporter, you have four brothers and sisters; your father was a rail employee and your mother was a housewife. I would like to ask you something, another thing: how has your life been? Have you lived happily?

Pope Francis

Good. You talked about dad, mum: dad worked, mum was a housewife, we are five siblings. And then, when we were kids, we all used to go together, with dad and mum, to the stadium on Sundays to watch the game, because we liked football, so much. I used to play football, but you know, I was not good, and my teammates used to call me *pata dura*, meaning peg leg, because I wasn't good at it. And that's why they would ask me to be a goalkeeper, because I didn't have to move, and as a goalkeeper I did okay, more or less. That was my relationship with sports in my family. My siblings are all dead except for the last one, who is still alive; I am the oldest and the youngest one is still living. These are good family memories.

Girl

Holy Father, pray for me, for the sick children.

Pope Francis

It is beautiful, what... What is your name?

Girl

Ludovica.

Pope Francis

What Ludovica said is beautiful: "Pray for me". It is something we should ask each other, that we pray for each other. Prayer. Because praying for each other is like attracting God's eye to us. Prayer is attracting God's eye. When you pray, God looks at you. And this, what you asked, is a beautiful thing. And you too, pray for others, you know? Pray for me and I will pray for you, and this relationship of asking for prayers is a relationship of brotherhood, of friendship, of two or three people who ask God to look at them. Praying is attracting God's gaze to us, and this is beautiful. Go ahead!
