



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE **BOLLETTINO**

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Audience Shalom Catholic Community

This morning, in the Paul VI Hall, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the participants in the meeting of the Shalom Catholic Community, to whom he delivered the following address:

Address of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning and welcome!

I thank Moysés and Maria for their introduction, and I thank you who have given your testimony. I will try to answer the questions you asked me; they arrived. I greet Cardinal Farrell, prefect of the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life, and Cardinal Scherer, who is so humble; he came to accompany you. Thank you.

I would first like to underline something that we heard from Moysés. He said that the Shalom Community was born forty years ago during a Eucharistic celebration, at the moment of the offertory. This is important! It was not created at a desk, with a good plan drawn up by him or by someone else. It was born in prayer, in the Liturgy. The episode in the Acts of the Apostles, when Paul and Barnabas are sent on mission, comes to mind - with due proportion - it happens during a community prayer in which the Holy Spirit asks for the two of them to be reserved for the mission to the Gentiles (cf. *Acts* 13:1-3). It is the Holy Spirit who makes the Church live - let us not forget this - who sends her forth. And this he does above all in prayer, and in a special way in the Liturgy. The Liturgy is not a beautiful ceremony, a ritual in which our gestures or, worse, our clothes are at the centre, no! The Liturgy is God's action with us, and we must be attentive to Him: to He who speaks, to He who acts, to He who calls, to He who sends... And this is not outside time and history, no, within historical reality, within situations. Thank you, Moysés, because your experience reminds us of this.

And now I will turn to the questions. You, Fabiola, asked me *how to persevere* in friendship with God in a frenetic world, and *how to spread* this experience in the environments in which we live. I would say: let us recall the word that the evangelist John repeats many times: "to remain". "Remain in me", says Jesus, "Remain in my love". "Remain". If we remain joined to Christ like the branches of the vine, we persevere and we also "spread".

Above all, if we remain in him with prayer, listening to the Word, worship, the Rosary, then the lifeblood of the Holy Spirit passes from him and we can persevere. But we can also “spread”, without doubt! He promised this: those who remain in him bear much fruit, says the Lord (cf. *Jn* 15:5). The fruit is love, and it is Christ’s love that touches the heart of people, wherever we are, in every environment. It is up to us to remain in him; the Holy Spirit does the rest. He is the protagonist, not us: it is him. Do not forget this. The agent of the growth of the Church is the Holy Spirit; even of the growth of my spirit.

Bertrand, you said that you were struck by the youthful style of the first meeting with the “Shalom” Community, and you asked how it was possible to *keep this spirit alive*, and also what is the importance of the *protagonism of young people* in the Church. Listen, to conserve a youthful spirit, you need to remain open to the Holy Spirit: it is he who renews hearts, renews life, renews the Church, renews the world. We are not talking about physical youth, but of youthfulness of spirit, that which shines through in the eyes of some elderly people more than in some young ones! It is not a question of age. And as Saint John Paul II said at World Youth Day 2000, those who stay with the young, remain young! (Cf. *Vigil at Tor Vergata*). If an elderly person isolates himself, and avoids young people, he ages sooner. Instead, it is good and enriching to stay a little with youngsters, with teenagers, with the young; not to “copy them” – this is ridiculous – and not to give sermons, but to listen to them, to speak with them, to recount some experiences. And with regard to protagonism, I would say two things. The first is the agency of holiness. I think of Carlo Acutis, as a recent example; but first of Piergiorgio Frassati, earlier still of Gabriel of Our Lady of Sorrows, of Theresa of the Child Jesus, of Francis and Clare of Assisi, who were young, and so on up to the first and perfect disciple: Mary of Nazareth - young - who was a girl when she said “here I am”. All these built up the Church and still build it up with their witness, corresponding to the grace of God. Second aspect: as pastors, towards young people, we must learn not to be paternalistic. Sometimes we involve young people in pastoral initiatives, but not fully. We risk “using” them a little, to make a good impression. But I wonder: do we really listen to them? Thank you, Bertrand.

And you, Dilma, have testified to the joy of *friendship with the poorest brothers and sisters*. And you ask how we can cultivate this friendship, and make others experience it too. I bring you just one example: a young nun, unknown at the time, responded to God’s call to be close to the poorest of the poor in Calcutta. Her name was Sister Teresa. Where did she find the strength to go out into the streets every day to collect the dying? She found it in her Lord Jesus, whom she received and adored every morning, and he would say to her: “I am thirsty”. And she would then go out and recognize him in the faces of those abandoned people. And we know what happened: first a few, then dozens, then hundreds of young women followed her example, and others joined in as volunteers. Near here, a hundred metres from where we are now, there is a house, called “Gift of Mary”, where the Missionaries of Charity take people in. I leave this as a response and a provocation.

And finally, Madalena and Jacqueline, you have brought us the charm of the first hour. Your question concerns the present and future path of the “Shalom” Community. And so, it requires a somewhat longer answer, which is addressed to everyone.

Your Community has been characterized since the very beginning by *creative courage*, by welcome and by great *missionary zeal*. Courageous. At that time Moysés was a young man; now, poor man, he is elderly, elderly. These distinctive features are still found today in the initiatives you carry forward in various countries, namely *creative courage, welcome, missionary zeal*. This work you carry out in various countries has given rise, over the years, to an ecclesial reality which now includes not only young people, but also families, celibates engaged in the mission, priests. Many things. With you, I bless the Lord for this, and I say to you: with God’s grace keep these gifts alive, creative courage, welcome and missionary zeal. Please: do not end up in the museum, no! You are not museum people, but those who walk with creative courage, with welcome, and with missionary zeal. Thank you.

Your name is “Shalom”. This word is not a slogan, it comes from the Gospel, it comes from the lips and the heart of the Risen Jesus, who, when he appeared to the disciples in the Upper Room, said: “Peace be with you” (*Jn* 20: 19, 21,26). This is “Shalom”, peace be with you. That peace of the heart that you received from your personal encounter with the Risen Jesus and from the experience of his infinite love. This peace has reconciled you with God, with yourselves, with others, and now you also try to transmit it to all the people you meet. The word “Shalom” is also engraved on the “Tau” the crucifix you wear around your neck, as a sign of your election

and of the call to be disciples of Jesus everywhere.

And in your name, there is also the word “Catholic”. Yours is a Catholic Community. It is the name of our Mother Church! Catholic: why? And you were born in her womb. You have enhanced the gifts and the vivacity with which the Church in Brazil is rich. You have harnessed the current of grace coming from the Charismatic Renewal, which has also fed your charism. You have placed Eucharistic celebration, worship, and Confession at the centre. You have emphasized preaching, music, and individual and community contemplative prayer. This is truly the “Catholic” wealth, and the inexhaustible wealth that is found in the Church and on which we must always draw. And when you say “Catholic”, you mean this.

Your Community is also Catholic because it has always walked side by side with the pastors of the Church. It was the then-archbishop of Fortaleza, Fr. Aloisio Lorscheider, who suggested to Moysés to offer something to Saint John Paul II, representing all young people. And the Holy Spirit inspired Moysés to offer his own life. It was Bishop Lorscheider himself, a Franciscan, who guided the spiritual identity of the young community by recommending the writings of Saint Teresa of Avila. Saint Francis and Saint Teresa are the inspirers of your spiritual journey. Many other pastors have helped and supported you. Always keep this spirit of filial obedience, affection and closeness to your pastors. This is very important. Do not turn away from your shepherds. Where there is a shepherd, there is Jesus. Indeed, we are like shepherds of Jesus.

Dear friends, in these forty years of your history, the features of the community have taken shape - there are the essential, constitutive traits - but it is a process that is not yet complete. Your founder is still at your head and you are therefore still in a “*foundational*” phase. I urge you to remain *docile to the action of the Spirit*, open to listening to each other and to the Church's guidance, in order to discern how best to continue on your journey.

As I mentioned earlier, your community was born from an act of self-offering. This is a grace, because it has inspired, and still inspires, in many young people the desire for a similar donation. But it is also an invitation to responsibility and prudence. The proposal of self-offering, in fact, without renouncing to show the beauty of the vocation to discipleship, must know how to *respect the freedom of individuals*, know how to wait for the different times of growth of each one and accompany with delicacy and discernment in the choice of the state of life to embrace and in the choice of community life. Docility to the Holy Spirit, experience and listening to the Mother Church will teach you to always avoid any form of interference in personal consciences; they will teach you to ensure that the various forms of communal life within your community always safeguard the proper autonomy and needs of the different vocations: of priests, of married persons and of those who have made a choice of celibacy for the mission.

Dear sisters and dear brothers, let us thank God for what you are and for what you do. Your charism is a *gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church*, to today's Church. Let us bless the Lord for the many young people who attend your groups, for the families who have been formed, for the many vocations and conversions, for the support you give to many parishes, for all the apostolate you carry out in the most diverse environments.

And you have come to Rome to *renew the offer* of your life and to renew, before the Successor of Peter, that founding act that was carried out forty years ago by your founder. May Saint Francis of Assisi and Saint Teresa of Jesus accompany you on your path. May the Virgin Mary, model of every donation to the Lord, keep in you the spirit of trust and abandonment to the Father, and help you to persevere in your choice. May the Lord accept the gift of your life, may the Lord sustain you with his grace; alone you can do nothing. I bless you from the heart, and please, I ask you to pray for me. Thank you.
