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Apostolic Journey of His Holiness Francis in Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Timor-Leste, and Singapore (2 to 13 September 2024) – Meeting with young people in the Centro de Convenções, Dili

This morning, after celebrating Holy Mass privately, the Holy Father Francis bade farewell to the staff and benefactors of the Apostolic Nunciature and transferred by car to the *Centro de Convenções de Dili* for the meeting with young people.

Upon arrival, at 09.50 (02.50 in Rome), the Pope was received by the executive president of the Timor-Leste National Catholic Youth Commission, Fr. Francisco Indra Tey Seran, and some young people who gave him the gift of flowers and the traditional stole, the *tais*. Pope Francis then entered the Great Hall and, before approaching the stage, paused in prayer before the statue of Our Lady, leaving a floral tribute.

After a traditional dance and the welcome greeting from the executive president of the Timor-Leste National Catholic Youth Commission, four young people gave their testimonies. The Holy Father then delivered an impromptu address, in dialogue with the young people present.

At the end of the meeting, after the prayer of the faithful, the blessing, and the gift from the young people, the Pope addressed some off-the-cuff words of greeting and thanks to the youngsters present. The Holy Father then proceeded to the main entrance, where two young people gave him some doves to set free as a symbol of peace. He then greeted the young people waiting him outside, in the square in front of the main entrance.

Pope Francis then transferred to *Presidente Nicolaus Lobato* International Airport for the farewell ceremony from Timor-Leste.

The following is the address delivered by the Pope during the meeting, and his impromptu words to the young people present before leaving the hall of the *Centro de Convenções de Dili*:

Address of the Holy Father

Dadeer di'ak! (Good morning!)

First of all, I will ask all of you a question, and we will see who can answer it: What do young people do? You [pointing to a young woman].

[the young woman]. "Proclaim Christ!" Very good.

What else do young people do?

[another young person] "Proclaim the Word of God". Very good.

What other things do young people do?

[another young person responds] "Love one another".

Young people have a great capacity to love. What other things do young people do?

[another young person] "We must cultivate peace in our country".

Never forget this. Very good. However, there is something that young people always do, young people of different nationalities and religions. Do you know what young people always do? They make a mess. Do you agree with this? [Young people respond] "Yes!"

I thank you for the greetings, the testimonies and the questions. I thank you for the dances because dancing is expressing a feeling with the whole body. Do you know a young person who doesn't know how to dance? Life comes with dancing, and you are a country of young people.

There is one thing I was saying this morning to a bishop: I will never forget your smiles. Do not stop smiling. Young people make up the majority of the population of this land, and your presence fills this land with life, hope and a future. Do not lose the enthusiasm of faith. Imagine a young person without faith, with a sad face!

Do you know what brings a young person down? Vices. Be on your guard. Because there are those who call themselves peddlers of happiness. They sell you drugs and so many things that only make you happy for only half an hour. You know this better than me, don't you? You know this situation better than me. Do you know or don't you know? I cannot hear you! [Young people respond] "Yes". Very good, thank you.

I wish you to go ahead forward with the joy of youth. But do not forget that you are heirs of those who preceded you in founding this nation. Therefore, do not lose your memory, the memory of those who came before you and sacrificed so much to bring this nation together.

There are two things that greatly touched my heart when I went out into your streets: the youth of this country and the smiles of its people. You are a people who know how to smile, keep it up, never forget it

A young person has to dream. You might ask, Holy Father, how can we dream? Do we drink alcohol? [Young people respond] "No". If you do that, you will have nightmares. I invite you to dream big. A young person who does not dream is already retired. Are any of you young people retired? [Young people respond] "No". Young people have to make a mess, to show the life they have. But a young person is usually in the middle of the road of life, between the young children and the elderly. One of the most beautiful treasures that a society has is the elderly, the grandparents. You young people are one of the treasures riches, and the other is the elderly, but it is the grandparents - the elderly - who give wisdom to the young people. Do you respect your elders? [Young

people respond] “Yes”. The elderly always precede us young people in history, don’t they? The elderly are a treasure. The two treasures of a population are the children and the elderly. Do you understand? So say it again, what are the two greatest treasures of a people? Young people and the elderly. That is why a society that has so many children, like you, has to take care of them. A society that has so many elderly, who are the memory, must respect them and take care of them.

Let me tell you a story. It happened that in one family, the father, the mother, the children and the very old grandfather were eating together. When the grandfather ate, he would spill things and drop his food. So the father decided to put a table in the kitchen so that the grandfather could eat alone there, and he explained to the family that this way, with the grandfather eating by himself, they could invite people over without being embarrassed by him. After a few days, the father arrived and found his five-year-old son playing with some wood. The father asked him, “What are you doing with that wood”? The child said, “I’m making a table”. “What for”? asked the father. The son replied, “for you, when you get old and have to eat alone”.

The two greatest treasures a society has are children and grandparents. Let us repeat together, what are the two greatest treasures of society? [Young people respond] “Children and the elderly”. Please take care of children and grandparents, okay? Now let us give a big round of applause to our grandparents.

You in this smiling country have a wonderful history of heroism, faith, martyrdom and, above all, forgiveness and reconciliation. I have a question: Who is the person out of all of history who was able to forgive and wanted reconciliation? Think carefully, who is the person? Who is it? [Young people respond] “Jesus!” Jesus, our brother who wants us all together, and the theme of reconciliation leads me to recommend three things to you young people: freedom, commitment and fraternity.

In the Tetum language there is a saying: “ukun rasik-an”, that is, to have the capacity to govern oneself. A young man or woman who is not able to govern himself or herself, and not able to live the “ukun rasik-an” - what are they? They are addicts. Very good. A man, a woman, a young person who does not rule himself or herself is a slave, he or she is an addict and not free. To what can a young person be a slave? To sin, to the mobile phone. Later on I will tell you something about the mobile phone. What other things can he or she be a slave to? You can be a slave to your own desire, to believing you are omnipotent. A young person can also be a slave to arrogance. On the contrary, a committed young person who works, what is he or she like? [A young person responds.] He or she is a young person who works, who loves simplicity, who is responsible, who loves the company of his brothers and sisters, and loves their country. That is very important.

There is another important theme that Rogéria, Cecilia and Efranio mentioned concerning the importance of taking care of our common home and cultivating family unity. A young person has to understand that being free is not about doing what you want, but that a young person has responsibility. One of the responsibilities is to learn to take care of the common home, and a young person has to commit himself or herself to this. There is an Eastern proverb that says: “difficult times create strong men”. Look at your parents, your grandparents, who had to face difficult times to build the freedom of the country. That is why you have to learn how to deal with hard times.

One last point before I go is that you have to learn the value of fraternity, meaning of being brothers and sisters, not enemies. Your elders, parents and grandparents, maybe had different ideas, but they were brothers and sisters. I ask you, is it good for young people to have different ideas? For what reason? To fight with others, or to respect each other? I think this is what you think, if I belong to this religion, and you belong to that other religion, we are going to argue. It is not like that, we must respect each other. Let us repeat that phrase: respect each other.

I ask you a question, is hatred a good attitude? [Young people respond] “No”. Love and service, these are the correct attitudes. Now all together let us repeat: no to hate, yes to love and service. Let us say it again, I can’t hear you. [Young people repeat.] If a young man or a young woman gets into a fight with another young person, what does he or she have to do? [Young people answer.] I cannot hear you, what did you say? Let us repeat all together: love and reconciliation. [Young people repeat.] Love and reconciliation.

There is something that often occurs in other countries, and I am not sure if it happens in this country: bullying. Is there bullying here? Bullying is an attitude of taking advantage of the weakest. Someone may be bullied because he or she is ugly, or fat, or walks badly. However this is always a bad attitude because it preys on the weakness of others. Here in Timor-Leste, is there bullying? Please, from now on, no more bullying.

Dear young people, be heirs to the beautiful history that preceded you, and carry it forward. Have the courage to take things forward. If you argue, reconcile. I thank you for all that you do for your country, for God's people. Let us remember what Ilham just mentioned, who spoke just now, that we have to love each other beyond all ethnic or religious differences. Do you understand this? Reconciliation, getting along in spite of our differences, it is important. Do we agree? [Young people respond] "Yes".

Before I finish, I have to give you a piece of advice, make a mess, make a mess. My second piece of advice is to respect and listen to the elders, okay? First piece of advice, what was it? That is good. And the second piece of advice?

God bless you very much, thank you for being here, thank you for the singing and dancing. It was very nice. What were the two pieces of advice? Make a mess and respect the elders. May God keep you joyful.

Words of the Holy Father at the end of the gathering, before departing:

Thank you for your joy, thank you for your smile. I gave you two pieces of advice. The young people have to make a mess and respect their elders. All right? All together, first: make a mess. Second: respect the elders.

Thank you for your presence. I am leaving this country of smiles with your faces as well as your hopes and dreams in my heart. May God bless you all.
