



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

GENERAL AUDIENCE

Paul VI Audience Hall

Wednesday, 9 August 2023

[Multimedia]

Catechesis. Apostolic Journey of His Holiness Pope Francis to Portugal on the occasion of the World Youth Day

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

In the past few days, I went to Portugal for the 37th World Youth Day. This World Youth Day in Lisbon, which took place after the pandemic, was considered by all to be a gift from God, who set in motion once again the hearts and footsteps of young people from all over the world. Many young people from all over the world — many of them — to encounter one another and to encounter Jesus.

As we well know, the pandemic had a severe impact on social behaviour: isolation that often degenerated into closure, and young people were particularly affected. With this World Youth Day, God gave a “push” in the other direction. It marked a new beginning of the great pilgrimage of young people across the continents, in the name of Jesus Christ. And it was not a coincidence that this happened in Lisbon, a city overlooking the ocean, a city that is a symbol of the great maritime explorations.

And so, at World Youth Day, the Gospel proposed the example of the Virgin Mary to young people. At the most critical time, she goes to visit her cousin Elizabeth, and the Gospel says Mary “arose and went with haste” (*Lk 1:39*). I like to invoke Our Lady in this way”, Our Lady “in haste”

who always does things with haste. She never makes us wait because she is the mother of everyone. In this way, Mary guides the pilgrimage of young people who follow Jesus today, in the third millennium, just as she did a century ago in Portugal, at Fatima, when she spoke to three children, and entrusted them with a message of faith and hope for the Church and the world. That is why I returned to [Fatima](#) during World Youth Day, to the place where the apparition took place, and, together with some young people who are sick, I prayed to God that he would heal the world from the diseases of the soul: pride, lies, enmity, violence are diseases of the soul, and the world is ailing from these diseases. And we renewed our consecration, the consecration of Europe, of the world, to Mary, to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. I prayed for peace because there are many wars all over the world, so many.

The young people of the world came to Lisbon in large numbers and with great enthusiasm. I met them in small groups and some had many problems. The group of young Ukrainians brought stories that were painful. It was not a holiday, a tourist trip and not even a spiritual event for its own sake. World Youth Day is an encounter with the living Christ through the Church: young people go to encounter Christ. It is true that where there are young people, there is joy, there is a bit of all these things!

[My visit to Portugal](#), on the occasion of World Youth Day, benefited from the festive atmosphere of this wave of young people. I thank God for this, thinking especially of the Church in Lisbon who, in exchange for the great effort made in organizing and hosting it, will receive new energies to continue her new journey, to cast her nets once again with apostolic zeal. The youth of Portugal are already today a vital presence, and now, after this “transfusion” received from Churches around the world, they will become even more so. And many young people passed through Rome on their way back from Lisbon. We are seeing them here too. There are some who participated in this Day. There they are! Wherever there are young people, there is noise. They are good at making it!

While in Ukraine and other places in the world there is fighting, and while in certain hidden halls war is being planned — this is bad, war is being planned! — World Youth Day showed everyone that another world is possible, a world of brothers and sisters, where the flags of all peoples fly together, next to each other, without hatred, without fear, without closing up, without weapons! The message of the young people was clear: will the “mighty of the earth” listen to it, I wonder? Will they listen to this youthful enthusiasm that wants peace? It is a parable for our time, and even today Jesus says: “He who has ears, let him hear. He who has eyes, let him see!” Let us hope that the entire world will listen to this World Youth Day and watch this beauty of the young, going forward.

Once again, I express my gratitude to Portugal, to Lisbon, to the President of the Republic, who was present at all the celebrations, and to the other civil authorities; to the Patriarch of Lisbon, who was good; the President of the Episcopal Conference, and the Bishop who organized World Youth

Day, and to all the collaborators and volunteers. Think that the volunteers — I went to meet them on the last day, before returning — numbered 25,000. This World Youth Day had 25,000 volunteers! Thank you all! Through the intercession of the Virgin Mary, may the Lord bless the young people of the entire world and may he bless the Portuguese people. Let us pray together to Our Lady, all together, that she may bless the Portuguese people.

[Recitation of the Hail Mary]

Special Greetings

I extend a warm welcome to the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today's Audience, especially the groups from Malta, Nigeria, Tonga and the United States of America. Upon you and your families I invoke the joy and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ. God bless you all!

In recent days, there have been tragic natural events in Slovenia and in Georgia, that have caused death and material destruction. I pray for the victims and I express my spiritual closeness to their families and to all those who suffer from these disasters and I thank those who have offered them assistance, especially the volunteers.

I turn my thoughts to young people, to the sick, to the elderly and to newlyweds, who are many! Today we celebrate the commemoration of Saint Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein), Virgin and Martyr, Co-Patroness of Europe. May her witness spur a commitment to dialogue and fraternity among people and against every form of violence and discrimination. Let us entrust the dear people of Ukraine to her intercession so that they may soon find peace.

I offer my blessing to all of you.

Summary of the Holy Father's words

Dear brothers and sisters: During my recent Apostolic Journey to Portugal for the celebration of World Youth Day, I witnessed a moving demonstration of the presence of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the Risen Christ, at work in the hearts and lives of young Christians throughout the world. Following the example of Mary, who “set out in haste” after the Annunciation, the young pilgrims expressed their desire to set out towards the future of hope promised by the Gospel. The encounter of so many young people from different countries, all united by the love of Christ and the joy of the Spirit, reflected the face of the Church as the People of God, to which everyone, in every place and time, is called to belong. In a world torn by poverty, injustice and war, we joined

in prayer for the spread of the Gospel, the conversion of hearts, and the healing and peace that the Lord alone can give. In this spirit, I also went as a pilgrim to Fatima, where I renewed the act of consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. May this great outpouring of spiritual joy and love for Christ that marked these days foster an abundance of vocations and serve as a leaven of hope for the future of Portugal, the Church and our world.