



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

GENERAL AUDIENCE

Saint Peter's Square
Wednesday, 27 September 2023

[Multimedia]

The Apostolic Journey to Marseille for the “Rencontres Méditerranéennes”

Dear brothers and sisters!

I went to Marseille at the end of last week to participate in the conclusion of the *Rencontres Méditerranéennes* [Mediterranean Meetings], which involved Bishops and Mayors from the Mediterranean area, along with many young people, to ensure an outlook that is open to the future. In fact, the event that took place in Marseille was entitled, “Mosaic of Hope”. This is the dream, this is the challenge: that the Mediterranean may recover its vocation of being a *laboratory of civilization and peace*.

As we know, the Mediterranean is a cradle of civilization and a cradle is for life! It is not tolerable that it should become a graveyard and neither should it be a place of conflict. The Mediterranean Sea is the complete opposite of the clash between civilizations, war and human trafficking. It is the exact opposite because the Mediterranean connects Africa, Asia and Europe; the north and the south; the east and the west; persons and cultures; peoples and languages; philosophies and religions. Of course, the sea is always in some way an abyss to overcome, and it can even become dangerous. But its waters safeguard treasures of life and its waves and winds carry all types of vessels.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ departed from its eastern shore 2,000 years ago. Of course, this [its

proclamation] did not happen magically; neither was it accomplished once and for all. It is the fruit of a journey in which each generation is called to travel a stretch, reading the signs of the times in which it lives.

The meeting in Marseille comes after similar meetings that took place in [Bari in 2020](#), and in Florence last year. It was not an isolated event, but a step forward in the itinerary that began at the end of the 1950s with the “Mediterranean Colloquia” organized by Giorgio La Pira, the Mayor of Florence. It is a step forward to respond today to the appeal launched by Saint Paul VI in his Encyclical [Populorum progressio](#), to promote “a more humane world community, where all can give and receive, and where the progress of some is not bought at the expense of others” (n. 44).

What came out of the Marseille event? What emerged is an outlook on the Mediterranean that I would simply call *human*, not ideological, not strategic, not politically correct nor instrumental; no, human, that is, capable of referring everything to the primary value of the human person and his or her inviolable dignity. Then, at the same time, a *hopeful* outlook emerged. This is very surprising today: when you hear testimonies from those who have lived through inhuman situations, or who have shared them, and they themselves give you a “profession of hope”. And it is also a *fraternal* outlook.

Brothers and sisters, this hope, this fraternity must not “evaporate”; no, rather, it needs *to be organized*, to be realized through long, medium and short-term actions so that people can *choose to emigrate or not to emigrate*, with complete dignity. The Mediterranean must be a message of hope.

But there is another complementary aspect: *hope needs to be restored to our European societies*, especially to the new generations. In fact, how can we welcome others if we ourselves do not first have a horizon that is open to the future? How can young people, who are poor in hope, closed within their private lives, worried about managing their own precariousness, open themselves to an encounter and to sharing? Often sickened by individualism, by consumerism and by empty escapism, our societies need to open themselves, to refresh their souls and spirits. Then they will be able to read the crisis as an opportunity and deal with it positively.

Europe needs to *find again its passion and enthusiasm*. And I can say that I found passion and enthusiasm in Marseille: in its Pastor, Cardinal Aveline; in the priests and consecrated persons; in the faithful laity dedicated to charity, to education; in the People of God who showed great warmth during the [Mass in the Vélodrome Stadium](#). I thank all of them, and the President of the Republic, whose presence demonstrated that all of France was paying attention to the event in Marseille. May Our Lady, whom the people of Marseille worship as *Notre Dame de la Garde*, accompany the journey of the peoples of the Mediterranean so that this region may become what it was always called to be — a mosaic of civilization and hope.

Special Greetings

I extend a warm welcome to the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today's Audience, especially the groups from Norway, The Netherlands, South Africa, India, Indonesia, the Philippines, Canada and the United States of America. My special greeting goes to the diaconate class of the Pontifical North American College, together with their families and friends. Upon all of you I invoke the joy and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ. God bless you!

Dear brothers and sisters, today is the liturgical memory of Saint Vincent de' Paul, who, moved by love of Christ, was committed to [the cause of] the marginalized in society. May his example also spur us to be close to our brothers and sisters in need.

Lastly, as usual, my thoughts turn to young people, to the sick, to the elderly and to newlyweds. Today's liturgical memory of Saint Vincent de Paul reminds us of the centrality of love for others. I urge each of you to nurture an attitude that is attentive to others and open to those who need you.

Summary of the Holy Father's words

Dear brothers and sisters: My recent visit to Marseille coincided with the conclusion of a significant Meeting of civil and religious leaders, and many young people, from the Mediterranean countries. The Meeting's theme, "Mosaic of Hope", alluded to the hope of freedom that inspires migrants to undertake dangerous journeys, but also Europe's own need for renewed hope in its future. The Mediterranean region, which embraces three continents and a great variety of cultures, is called, especially at this time of forced migrations, to be a "workshop of civilization and peace" in the service of a more humane and fraternal world. The Meeting thus reaffirmed the importance of respect for both the right to emigrate and the right not to emigrate, and the urgent need, in light of present migration patterns, for adequate structures of security, welcome and integration. May young people in particular help to compose the "Mosaic of Hope" which is the present and future of the Mediterranean world, and likewise see that hope reflected in the faces of their brothers and sisters come from afar.