



The Holy See

PASTORAL VISIT OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO GENOA

ENCOUNTER WITH THE YOUNG PEOPLE OF THE DIOCESAN MISSION

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS*

Shrine of Our Lady of the Guard

Saturday, 27 May 2017

[Multimedia]

Prayer to Our Lady of the Guard

I invite you to pray to Our Lady in silence; each one of you, tell her what you have in your heart. She is our mother, the Mother of Jesus, our Mother. In silence, each one of you, tell her what you feel in your heart.

[Prayer to Our Lady of the Guard]

[Greeting from Cardinal Bagnasco]

Holy Father's answers to questions

Question from Chiara Parodi

Your Holiness, how good it is to have you here! In your Apostolic Exhortation [Evangelii gaudium](#), you invited all the Church to be outbound. Following the suggestion of our cardinal, we have initiated the mission "Gioia piena" ("Full joy") to resume the words Jesus said in the Gospel of John: "These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full" (Jn 15:11). We ask for your blessing, for us, for the boys and girls we have met and will meet, and also some advice on how to be missionaries for our peers who live in difficult situations of suffering and who are victims of drugs, alcohol, violence and the deceptions of the evil one. Thank you! We

love you.

Question from Luca Cianelli

Holy Father, you have decided that next year the Synod of Bishops will be dedicated to the young: indeed, it will have as its title, "Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment". We think that we encounter God in our life every day, in daily life, in school, at work, with friends, in the life of prayer, in the silence of prayer, And so we ask you for some advice on how to live our spiritual life and prayer. Thank you!

Question from Emanuele Santolini

Hello, Pope Francis. Today our lives have a very fast and frenetic pace, and this makes encounter and listening, and above all the construction of true relationships and true sharing, difficult. So, many of us, young people, do not have the time or the opportunities for meeting the person of our life, the person Jesus has imagined for us, to build that great project of love that is marriage. Can you give us some advice of how to live a full life and how to succeed in doing so, building true, full and sincere relationships? Thank you.

Question from Francesca Marrollo

Holy Father, nowadays the media communicate to us situations of violence and war, accounts from both near and far of great suffering. Many of our peers, migrants from distant countries, bloodied by selfishness, live today in our cities in very difficult conditions. We are convinced that, through these brothers and sisters of ours, God is speaking to us. What is He telling us? What gestures can we make, along with the adult Christian community, to respond to these challenges that history, inhabited by the Holy Spirit, is presenting to us today? Thank you.

Pope Francis:

Good afternoon! I am rather afraid because Emanuele said "we are all frenetic" [laughter]... I don't know how to answer. The cardinal has spoken of your love, and he said that your love is a turbulent and cheerful love. And this is good. With "frenetic", "turbulent" and "cheerful", we make a good mix and the result will be good! It is a joy for me to meet you. It is a meeting I always look forward to: meeting the young. What they think, what they are looking for, what they desire, what challenges they have, and many things. And you, who do not want ready-made answers, you want concrete but personal answers, not like these clothes we buy *prêt-à-porter*, no. You do not want *prêt-à-porter* answers. You want dialogue, things that touch the heart.

Chiara, thank you for sharing this experience that you have lived during this year. Hearing Jesus' invitation is always a full joy. And the Lord also says in the same passage of the Gospel, "no one

will take your joy from you” (cf. Jn 16:22). No one will take it from you. Joy. Which is not the same thing as enjoying yourself. Yes, it makes you happy, joy, but it is not superficial. Joy that goes inside and is born from the heart; and this joy is what you have lived this year. Thank you.

Now, I would like to ask – I would like to, but there is no time and I can’t, but... how did you feel that this experience you have had has transformed you: is this true, or are they just words? Why – this is the question – does going out on a mission, mean letting yourself be transformed by the Lord? Normally, when we live these things, these activities, as Chiara as underlined well, we are joyful because things are going well. But there is also another transformation, that very often we do not see, which is hidden and is born in the life of each one of us. The mission, being missionaries leads us to learn how to look. Listen carefully to this: learn to look. *Learn to look with new eyes*, because with the mission, our eyes are renewed. Learn to look at the city, our life, our family, all that there is around us. The missionary experience opens our eyes and our heart: learn to look also with the heart. And in this way, we stop being, permit me the word, *tourists in life*, so as to become men and women, young people who love with commitment in life. “Tourists in life”: you have seen those who take photographs of everything, when they come as tourists, and do not look at anything. They do not know how to look ... and then they look at the photographs at home! But it is one thing looking at reality, and another looking at photographs. And if our life is that of a tourist, we will look only at the photographs or the things we think about reality. It is a temptation, for the young, to be tourists. I do not mean going for a stroll here and there, no, this is good! I mean looking at life with the eyes of a tourist, that is, superficially, and taking photographs to look at later on. This means that I don’t touch reality, I don’t look at the things that happen. I don’t look at things as they are. The first thing that I would answer, with regard to your transformation, is to set aside that attitude of the tourist so as to become young people with a serious commitment with life, seriously. The time of mission prepares us and helps us to be more sensitive, more attentive and to look with attention. And at the many people who live with us, in daily life, in the places where we live and that, for not knowing how to look, we end up ignoring. How many people about whom we can say, “Yes, yes, he is this, she is that”, but we do not know how to look at their heart, we do not know what they think, what they feel, because our heart has never drawn close to them. Perhaps I have spoken to them many times, but in a superficial way. The mission can teach us to look with new eyes, it brings us closer to the heart of many people, and this a beautiful thing, it is a beautiful thing!

And it destroys hypocrisy. To find grown people, adults who are hypocrites, is ugly, but they are grown people, who make of their lives what they will, they know what they are doing. ... But meeting a young person who starts life with an attitude of hypocrisy, this is suicide. Do you understand? It is suicide. And never leaving the road of tourists in life, means to go along pretending, and not looking at the heart of people so as to speak with authenticity and transparency.

And then there is another thing: you said that the mission is beautiful and you have learned. But

when I go on a mission, it is not only *my* decision, that makes me go. There is *another person who sends me*, who sends me to go on a mission. And it is not possible to go on a mission without being sent by Jesus. It is Jesus Himself Who sends you, it is Jesus who drives you towards the mission and who is there beside you; it is Jesus Himself Who works in your heart, changes your outlook and makes you look at life with new eyes; not with the eyes of a tourist. Do you understand?

In this way we learn that to live closed up, even wrapped up in “tourism”, is no use, it does not help. We must live in mission, which presupposes that we listen to Him, to He Who sends me, Who is always Jesus, and I go out to the people, I go to others, and I speak about my life, about Jesus, and about many things, but with a transformation of my personality that makes me look in another way. And even feeling things in a different way. Let us think – to understand this well – when Jesus went on the street, he was always among the people; once, (cf. Mk 5:25-34), Jesus stopped and said: “Who touched me?” And the disciples: “You see the crowd pressing around you, and yet you say, ‘Who touched me?’” Jesus was not used to the fact that they touched Him. No, He was not a “tourist”. He understood the intentions of the people and had understood that if there was a person who touched Him, it was in order to be healed. And that woman said to herself, “If I touch even his garments, I will be made well”. We too. We must know the people as they are, as we have an open heart and we are not tourists among the people: we are envoys and missionaries.

The mission also helps us to look at each other, in the eyes, and to recognize that *we are brothers*, there is not a city or even a Church of the good and a city or a Church of the bad. The mission helps us not to have clouded vision. It purifies us of the thought that there is a Church of the pure and one of the impure; we are all sinners and we are all in need of the proclamation of Christ, and if when I announce Jesus Christ in the mission I do not think or feel that I am saying it to myself, then I detach myself from the person and I think myself, I can believe myself, pure and the other as impure and in need. The mission involves all of us, as the people of God, it transforms us: it changes our outlook, it changes our way of going through life, from a “tourist” to someone involved, and it removes from our mind that idea that there are groups, that there are the pure and the impure in the Church; we are all children of God. All sinners and all with the Holy Spirit within, that has the capacity to make us saints.

You asked me – and Emanuele too asked me the same thing – how to be missionaries towards our peers, especially those who live in difficult situations, who are victim of drugs, alcohol, violence and the deceptions of the evil one. I think that the first thing is *to love them*. We cannot do anything without love. A gesture of love, a look of love ... You can make plans to help them, but without love ... and love means giving life. Jesus said: “Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends” (cf. Jn 15:13). He set the example, He gave His life. Love. If you do not feel this, or at least you do not have it – and I say “you”, but I am speaking to everyone, because you asked me the question but I say it to all – if you do not have a heart willing

to love – the Lord teaches us to love – you will not be able to carry out a good mission. The mission will be spent as an adventure, a form of tourism. Prepare yourselves and go with a heart willing to love. Help them to love. One of the things that I ask, not to every person but when there is the opportunity, in the confessional, is: “But do you help people? Do you give alms?” “Yes”, many of them say. Yes, because people are good, people want to help. “And tell me, when you give alms, do you touch the hand of the person to whom you are giving it, or do you withdraw it straight away?” And at that point some do not know what to say. And more: “When you give alms, do you look in the eyes of that homeless person who asks you for alms? Or do you go away in a hurry?”. Love. Love means having the ability to hold a dirty hand and the ability to look in the eyes of those who are in a situation of degradation and say: “For me, you are Jesus”. And this is the beginning of every mission, with this love I must go and speak. If I speak to people thinking, “Ah, these stupid people who know nothing of religion, I will teach them how...”. Please! It is better to stay at home and pray the Rosary, it will do you more good than setting out on a mission. I don’t know if you have understood this.

And why must I love these people? Those victims of drugs, of alcohol, of violence, of the deceptions of the evil one? Behind all these situations you have mentioned, there is a certainty that we must not forget, a certainty that must make us *stubborn in hope*: to carry out the mission you must be stubborn in hope. In every one of these people who are victims of difficult situations, there is an image of God Who for various reasons was mistreated and trampled. There is a history of pain, of sufferings that we cannot ignore. And this is the folly of faith. When Jesus says to us: “I was in prison and you came to me” – “But you are crazy!” – it is the folly of faith. The folly of the cross, of which St. Paul speaks; the folly of proclaiming the Gospel. There is Jesus there, and this means learning to look with Jesus’ eyes, as Jesus looks, at these people. As He looks at them. If Jesus, when He says to us – the questions they will ask us on the other side (cf. Mt. 25, 31-46) – He tells us that He was those people, it is the mystery of love in the heart of Jesus.

I have had the chance, once – in Argentina I was already accustomed to visiting prisons – and on one occasion I greeted a person who had committed more than fifty homicides. And I stayed there thinking, “But you are Jesus”, because He had said that if you come to visit me in prison, I am there, in that man. To be missionaries it takes that folly of the cross, that folly of evangelical proclamation: that Jesus works miracles, that Jesus is not a healing wizard who cures people. Jesus is in every one of us, in each one of us. And perhaps some of you in this moment are in a situation of mortal sin, in a situation of being far from Jesus, perhaps... But Jesus is there, He waits. He is there with you. He never leaves us. If I go with love, not as a tourist, and this transforms me, I go as one who is stubborn in hope and I go knowing that I touch, I see, I listen to Jesus Who works in the heart of each person I encounter in the mission. Do you understand? And with regard to those you mentioned, those who are discarded by society – it is important – I have said, never feel bad about shaking the dirty hand of a homeless person, of these people, for example.

We are all dirty. And He saved me, I say: thank you Lord, because I too could be that person. If I did not end up as a drug user, why, Lord? By Your will. But if the Lord had let go of me, I too, all of us... [Where would we have ended up?] And this is love, the grace, that we must proclaim: Jesus is in those people. Please, do not label people with adjectives! I go on the mission with love, with the stubbornness of hope, to take a message to the people with a name, not adjectives. And how often does our society disdain and classify: "No, he is a drunk! No, I will not give alms to this one because he will go and buy a glass of wine, and he has no other happiness, poor man, in life?"; "Ah, no, he is a drug user", "This, that, this, that...". Never label people with adjectives. Only God can place a label on someone, only God's judgement. And He will do so: in the final Judgement, definitively, on each one of us: "Come, blessed by my Father; away, the damned...". Adjectives: He will use them, but we must not. I go on the mission to take great love.

Then, in that transformation – I was enthusiastic about your question, I had written it down and reflected upon it – we are used to a culture of *emptiness*, a culture of *solitude*. People – we too – are alone inside, and we need noise so as not to feel this void, this solitude. This is what the world offers, and this has nothing to do with the joy we have spoken about. The void: if there is something that destroys our cities it is this isolation. Going on a mission means helping come out of isolation and making community, fraternity. "But I don't like him..." "He is like this, or that...". Never label: Jesus loves everyone. If I go on a mission, I must be willing to love everyone. There is not that full joy, which is what you said the mission gave you. While there are many of our brothers with an outlook disfigured by a society that defends itself only with exclusion, by isolating people, ignoring them. Never, if we want to be missionaries and take the Gospel and have this joy, never exclude, never isolate anyone, never ignore. I don't know if I have answered something.

And thank you, Luca, for your restlessness. Genoa is a port city, which historically has received many ships and has produced great navigators! To be a disciple it takes the same navigator's heart: *horizon and courage*. If you have no horizon, or prospect, and are unable to look at what is under your nose, you will never be a good missionary. If you do not have courage, you will never be one. It is the virtue of the navigator: they know how to read the horizon, to go, and they have the courage to go. Let us think of the great navigators of the fifteenth century, many set out from here. You have the opportunity to know everything with new techniques, but these techniques of information very often make us fall into a trap: because instead of being informed we are saturated, and when you are saturated your horizon draws in, until you have a wall in front of you, and you lose the capacity to look to the horizon. Be careful: always watch for what they are selling you! Also what they are selling you in the media. Contemplation, the capacity to contemplate the horizon, of making your own judgement, not eating what they serve you on a plate. This is a challenge: it is a challenge that I think should lead us to prayer, to say to the Lord, "Lord, I ask you a favour: please, never stop challenging me". Challenges to our horizon which require courage. Are you Genoese? *Navigator: horizon and courage*. And to all Genoese, I say: onwards! That prayer I offered to you: "Lord, I ask you a favour, challenge me today". Yes, "Jesus, please, come, trouble me, give me the courage to be able to answer to the challenge and to You". I like this

Jesus Who bothers, Who troubles: because He is the living Jesus, Who moves within you with the Holy Spirit. And how good it is to see a boy or a girl let themselves be moved by Jesus; and the young person who does not allow his or her mouth to be closed easily, who learns not to stay with a closed mouth, who is not happy with simplistic answers, who seeks the truth, who looks for the profound, who sets out at large, who goes ahead, onwards. And who has the courage to ask questions about the truth and many things. We must learn to challenge the present. A healthy spiritual life generates lively young people, who when faced with some things that are offered nowadays by this culture – “normal”, they say, it may be, I don’t know – ask themselves, “Is this normal, or is this not normal?”. The courage to seek the truth. Is it normal that every day that sense of indifference increases? I don’t care what happens to others: indifference with friends, neighbours, in our neighbourhood, at work, in school... Is it normal – as Francesca invites us to ask – that many of our peers, migrants or from distant, difficult countries, bloodied by selfishness that leads to death, that they live in our cities in truly difficult situations? Is this normal? Is it normal that the Mediterranean has become a cemetery? Is this normal? Is it normal that many, many countries – and I am not saying Italy, because Italy is very generous – is it normal that many countries are closing their doors to these people who are wounded and flee from hunger, from war, these exploited people, who come in search of a little security ... is it normal? This question: is this normal? If it is not normal, I must get involved to make sure it doesn’t happen. My dear, this takes courage, it takes courage.

Returning to navigators, Christopher Columbus, whom they say was one of yours – but we know, but many like him or he himself perhaps departed from here – of him they say, “This crazy man wants to arrive here going from there”. But he had reasoned on the “normality” of certain things and faced a great challenge: he had courage. Is it normal that, faced with the pain of others, our attitude is to close the doors? If it is not normal, get involved. Challenging the present is having the courage to say, “There are things that seem normal but they are not normal”. And you, this you must think: these are not things willed by God, and they must not be willed by us! And say this with force! This is Jesus: untimely, Who breaks up our systems, our plans. It is Jesus Who sows in our hearts the restlessness to ask this question. And this is good: this is very good!

I am sure that you Genoese are able to face great horizons and with great courage, but it depends on you and whether you want to do so; it does not depend on me. This evening I will return and I will leave a seed. To you I leave the challenge, or as them say in my home, I will throw you the gauntlet. You will see.

I will end with a suggestion: every morning, a simple prayer: “Lord, I ask You please, today, do not neglect to challenge me. Yes, Jesus, please, come and trouble me a little, and give me the courage to be able to respond to You”. Thank you!

You are here, seated, in the shade; here we are cool [in the shrine]. But outside there are – can you hear them? They know how to make a noise! – there are many who have resisted in the sun,

standing... Let's applaud them! I saw them, I saw them from here. They were all quiet because they were listening, and they have followed everything. It seems to me that they have some courage and horizons: at least they do, and I hope you do too! Now I will give you my blessing, but before receiving the blessing let us greet Our Lady:

Hail Mary...

[Blessing]

Greeting to detainees

I would also like to greet and bless all the detainees in Genoa and in Liguria, who have followed this encounter. I will give – with you in silence – my blessing to them.

[Blessing]

**Bulletin of the Holy See Press Office, 27 May 2018*
