



The Holy See

“CHILDREN MEET THE POPE - LET US LEARN FROM BOYS AND GIRLS”

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO CHILDREN FROM VARIOUS PARTS OF THE WORLD**

Paul VI Audience Hall

Monday, 6 November 2023

[Multimedia]

Thank you from the bottom of my heart to all of you for coming, to your chaperones, and to the organizers of this meeting: to Cardinal José Tolentino and the Dicastery for Culture and Education, to Fr Enzo Fortunato, who hails from Naples, to your families, and to all the people and associations who have offered their contribution, to Aldo who worked hard and to everyone here. Thanks to everyone.

The theme of our meeting is “Let Us Learn from Boys and Girls”. But what can we learn from you? Can we learn something? What do you think? Can we learn from you or not? [laughter and shouts] I can’t hear you... [they shout back: “yes”] It is true. We need to learn from you. I am always happy when I meet you because you teach me something new every time. For example, you remind me how beautiful life is in its simplicity, and you also teach me how beautiful it is to be together! These are two great gifts from God: being together and in simplicity.

And we want to tell the world so let’s do it now together, and repeat after me. “Life is a gift!” All together: [they repeat] I can’t hear you well... [they repeat louder] It is true: life is a gift, a beautiful gift and we are all brothers and sisters. Are we enemies? [they reply: “no”] I can’t hear you.... Are we enemies? [they shout louder: “no”] Are we brothers and sisters? [they reply: “yes”]. Well done, well done. You have answered well.

In fact, you have come here from all over the world, just like many brothers and sisters who meet

one another in a big house. It's the big house that Jesus has given us: the Church is the family home and the Lord always receives us with an embrace, with a caress.

I wish I could welcome all of you one by one. But there are many of you, so I say to all you children, that you are wonderful, your age is wonderful, and I tell you to go forward. And you are really in the Church. Let us think of the children who are suffering at this time — let us not forget this — from climate disasters, from hunger, from war and from poverty. Do you know that there are bad people that do bad things, that make war, destroy ... Do you want to do bad things? [they reply: "no"] Do you want to help? [they reply: "yes"] I like this, I like this.

Dear children, your presence here is a sign that goes straight to the hearts of all us adults. And we, the grown-ups have to look at your spontaneity and listen to your message.

You have prepared some questions. To avoid being boring with my speech, let's hear the questions and what you have prepared for me. And many thanks, thank you dear children. And remember: life is an amazing gift. Shall we say it together? Life is an amazing gift. One more time: life is a wonderful gift. God loves us so much and it's nice to be together, communicate, share and give. Always do this and Our Lady will help you. Make sure you always pray to our Lady! Do you pray to Mary? [they reply: "yes"] Do you pray to Our Lady? [they reply louder: "yes"] Always. Never stop. And pray for me too. Thank you.

Hello, Pope Francis, my name is Isidora. I am nine years old and I come from Brazil. Do you think we children can save the Earth?

Yes, yes, because you are simple and you understand that to destroy the Earth means to destroy ourselves. We must protect the Earth: do you understand this? If you destroy the Earth, you destroy yourself. Let us all say this together, slowly, without shouting: "To destroy the Earth is to destroy ourselves". Let's go [they repeat] One more time: [they repeat again] And you know, the Earth gives us everything to live on: it gives us oxygen, it gives us water, it gives us herbs, it helps us to live. If we destroy the Earth, we destroy ourselves. All together: "Those who destroy the Earth, destroy us". All together: "Destroying the Earth means destroying ourselves". Thank you!

Dear Pope Francis, my name is Rania and I am of Palestinian origin. I wanted to ask you, if World War III starts, will peace ever return?

You asked a question that also touches your land which is suffering so much at this time. If war breaks out — war has already broken out, dear ones. Listen to this: war has broken out all over the world. Not only in Palestine. It has broken out in South Africa, it has broken out in the Congo, it has broken out in Myanmar, it has broken out all over the world. These are hidden wars, in Mozambique... all over the world. We are living through an ugly war and war takes away our peace and takes away our lives. We need to think a little and work for peace. Let's say it together, in a low voice: "Let us work for peace". Everyone! [they repeat] And this girl, whose name is Rania, her homeland is at war and there is great suffering. Let's do something: in silence, let's greet Rania and all the people of her homeland. And you [Rania], let the people of Palestine know that all the children send their greeting. Peace is beautiful. Everyone: "Peace is beautiful". [they repeat] Thank you, Rania.

Hello, Pope Francis, my name is Massimo and I am Italian. I would like to ask you: what do you dream about at night? [...]

What do I dream about at night? I don't know what I dream about, because I am asleep! It's true. Sometimes, some dreams are memories of when I was young or I was a child, and I remember these things in my dreams. But for the most part, I am asleep. It is nice to dream. When one dreams something, there is something of your life in it. Let's say it together: "It is beautiful to dream". All together! [...]

Hello, Pope, my name is Ivan and I am Ukrainian. Can you tell us how to make peace?

This is a very difficult question. How do you make peace? Come! Come here. It is not easy to explain how to make peace. It is easier to explain how to make war because we make war with hatred, revenge, hurting the other person. And this comes from instinct. But how do we make peace? Let's think for a minute about his question which is a very intelligent one. His country is at war and he knows how much need there is for peace. I will ask the question; let's think about it and then see how to go about answering it. How do we make peace? Let's think in silence. [a moment of silence] Have you thought about how to make peace? [they answer: "yes"] There is no method to learn how to make peace. There is a gesture: peace is made with the hand outstretched, with the hand of friendship, outstretched, always trying to involve other people, to go together. An outstretched hand. I ask you: do you want to make peace? [they answer: "yes!"] Let's make a gesture, all together: an outstretched hand, all together, you too, all together. Peace is made with an outstretched hand, greeting friends, welcoming everyone at home. Peace is made with the heart and with outstretched hands. Let's say it together: "Peace is made with the heart and with the outstretched hand". All together! [...]

Dear Pope, my name is Kim Ngan, I am 11 and I come from Vietnam. I wanted to understand, if they did not listen to you, who know so much, why would they listen to us, and how can they do so?

Come, come here. Kim Ngan is from Vietnam, and she is asking me how can people listen to you children. People are very concerned about many things, so many things, and they forget to listen to children. But you have to speak about things as you see them, tell the truth, say what you feel because your voice is needed. Let's say it all together: "Children's voices are needed". Everyone! Children's voices are needed. And you must help so that adults will listen to us, so that adults will listen to you, because you are messengers of peace. Let us all say together: "Children are messengers of peace". Together! [they repeat] [...]

Hello, Pope Francis, I am Antrànik and I come from Syria. Why do you think children are killed in wars and no one defends them?

Why are children killed during wars? I have seen in war reports and in the news, how many children have died. They are innocent, and this shows the wickedness of war. Because if only soldiers were being killed, it would be a different thing. But they kill innocent people, they kill children. Why do they kill children in wars? This is cruelty. I will now make a suggestion, to accompany Atrànik. Why do they kill children in wars? Let's have a little moment of silence, all of us, and let's think of the many children killed in wars. It's ugly and it's an injustice. Let's think about the children who have been killed. [moment of silence] Why do they kill children, during wars, and no one defends them? This shows the cruelty of war: war is always cruel, and who "pays the bill"? Children. The innocent are killed. Let us pray together to the Lord for children: "Our Father, who art in heaven [...]". Why do they kill children in wars? Let us pray for the children who suffer and are killed in wars. And thank you. Well done.

Dear Pope, my name is Celeste. I am Peruvian and I wanted to know, who are your friends?

She is asking me who my friends are. My friends are the people who live with me at home; they are friends. Then I have many friends outside, in some parishes. Even some cardinals are my friends.... I have the blessing of having friends, and this is a grace from God, because those who have no friends are sad people. Do you understand? A person who has no friends is a sad person. Let's say it together: "A person who has no friends is a sad person". Let's try to have some friends: always have friends. And thank you for the question. [...]

Dear Pope, my name is Pauline. I come from the Congo, which you know well. I wanted to ask you what is the most important thing you have experienced in your life?

She is asking me what is the most important thing in life. I am not sure how to answer because there were many important things in my life.... I will tell you the truth, even this meeting is important in my life because I am meeting you, your dreams [desires]... But it is always good to think about the happy moments we experienced in life and leave the bad ones aside because we have all have experienced bad times. No, happy times. Now, [let's] have some silence and each of us think about the happiest times we have had in our lives. [...]

Hi, I am Sofia and I come from the Philippines. When you get angry, how do you calm yourself down?

Well, sometimes I get angry. But I don't bite, I don't bite. How do I calm myself down? When I was a child, a person who helped me a lot in my life once told me: "When you are angry, drink a glass of water before answering back". This is good advice. Shall we say it together? "When you are angry, drink a glass of water before replying". One more time. [they repeat] Because you know that when people are angry, they do not speak, they bite. And this is not nice. Let's leave anger to the dogs [play on Italian word for anger, rabbia, which also means rabies]. Let's try to be meek and not allow ourselves to give in to anger. Let's repeat it one more time: "When you are angry, drink a glass of water before replying". Thank you.

Hello, Pope Francis, my name is Luxelle. Why is it so hot even though it is Autumn?

Her question is very important. She is asking why it is so hot at this time, even though it is Autumn. [...] Do you know why? Because we, people, do not safeguard creation, we do not safeguard nature, and nature is rebelling. We have to learn to safeguard creation, to safeguard nature and not to "dirty" nature. Together: "Safeguarding nature". Together! [they repeat] I can't hear you... [they repeat louder]. One more time! [they repeat]. Because nature is our future. Thank you.

Hello, Holy Father. My name is Susai and I come from Samoa. I would like to ask you, are you worried about the environment?

You come from Samoa. She is asking me whether I am worried about the environment. I am very worried about the environment because we are ruining nature. In the North Pole now, ice has melted and it can be navigated. In the South Pole a 200-square-kilometre iceberg broke off because the Earth is getting warmer. Sea levels are rising and covering the Land, the fish in the sea are contaminated because we throw many things into the sea. This is why I am worried about nature. We should all be worried about nature and we have to help. For example, if you are on a river or at the beach and you drink a coca-cola, do you throw the bottle in the river or in the sea? Should you do this? [they reply: "no"] We have to safeguard nature, we have to safeguard creation

because we are part of nature and not ruin it. I am worried about nature and you too should be worried about nature. Thank you.

Good morning, Pope Francis, my name is Chris and I come from Haiti. Since with their behaviour adults are leaving us a polluted world, from whom should we children learn to respect our planet?

Bonjour! We have to learn to safeguard our planet, to learn from teachers, from professors, even people who know how to think, from our parents, in the family. Safeguarding creation because by safeguarding creation we are also safeguarding ourselves as we are part of creation. Please, as children do everything you can to safeguard creation. Let's say it together: "To safeguard creation!". Together! [they repeat] One more time!" [...]

Hello, Pope Francis. My name is Drew and I come from Australia. I was wondering, how do you spend your free time?

What do I do during the day? I work. There is a lot of work here. I work by listening to people, putting things in order, thinking about how to move forward, making things go better. I work. I wake up early, I pray and I work. Work is a good thing because, I will ask you something, is it good for people not to work or to get used to not working? Yes or no? [they reply: "no"]. No. Work is healthy. Let's say it together! [they repeat] We always have to learn to work. Work gives you dignity. God's commandment is "earn your daily bread", making a living, working. Work gives us dignity. All together: "Work gives us dignity". I can't hear you... [they repeat more loudly] Thank you, well done.

Hello, Pope Francis. My name is Salma and I come from Ghana. [...] How can we avoid so much waste?

She asked an intelligent question. She asked: how can we avoid wasting so many things? Please, do not waste, do not waste your food because there are many people who do not eat; always consume your meals, do not throw them away. Food is a grace from God. Let's say it together: "Do not waste food". All together: [they repeat] And if there are some leftovers from lunchtime, eat them in the evening but do not throw away food. It is a bad sin. Thank you. Well done.

We spoke about many things, but the most beautiful one that touches your heart is peace because you do not want war, you want there to be peace in the world. Now, all together let us make a sign of peace and hold one another's hands and say goodbye. We will say goodbye by holding one another's hand in a sign of peace. [a hymn plays as the children shake hands]

Now, all together, let us pray a little. Let us pray in silence and I will give you my blessing. Let's receive the blessing in silence. Let us pray to Our Lady: "Hail Mary [...]".

And now in silence, let us receive the blessing and each one of you can think about your family, think about all the people to whom you would like this blessing to reach. May God Almighty bless you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

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