



The Holy See

FIRST WORLD CHILDREN'S DAY

GREETING OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

*Olimpic Stadium
Saturday, 25 May 2024*

[Multimedia]

Dear children and young people!

Here we are! The adventure of World Children's Day has begun. We are gathered here at the Olympic Stadium, to "kick-off" the movement of girls and boys who want to build a world of peace, where we are all brothers and sisters, a world that has a future because we want to take care of the environment around us. Your song, "Beautiful World," says it all. Thank you for that!

In you, children, everything speaks of life and of the future. The Church, as a mother, welcomes you and accompanies you with tenderness and hope. Last November 6, I had the joy of welcoming thousands of children from many parts of the world to the Vatican. You brought a wave of joy with you that day; and you shared with me your questions about the future. That meeting left a lasting impression in my heart. I realized that our conversation had to continue and expand to reach more children and young people. That is why we are here today: to keep the dialogue going, as well as to ask and answer questions.

I know wars make you sad, but I want to ask: are all of you truly saddened about the wars? [Children respond] "Yes!" – I don't hear you – [children respond again] "Yes!". Today I welcomed children who fled from Ukraine and they were in a lot of pain due to the conflict. Some of them were even wounded. Is war a good thing? [Children respond] "No!" – I cannot hear you – [children respond again] "No!". Is peace a beautiful thing? [children respond] "Yes!". It makes me happy to hear children say this. You are hurting because many of your peers cannot go to school. There are

so many girls and boys who cannot go to school. These are realities that I carry in my heart, and I pray for them. We need to pray for children who cannot go to school, for children who suffer because of wars, for children who have no food, and for children who are sick but have no one to take care of them.

I have another question. Listen well. Do you know the motto of this World Children's Day? Does anyone know what the motto is? The motto is a phrase taken from the Bible, "Behold I make all things new". Have you heard of it? [Children respond] "Yes!". Behold I make all things new. Let's say it together. [All together] "Behold I make all things new". One more time, "Behold I make all things new". This is the motto and it is beautiful. Imagine that God wants this, everything that is not new passes away, but God is eternally new. The Lord always gives us newness.

Dear children, let us go ahead with joy. Joy is good for the soul. Dear children, Jesus said in the Gospel that He loves you, do you know how much Jesus loves you? I can't you hear! [Children respond] "Yes!". And the devil, does he love you? [Children respond] "No!". Well done! Courage and keep going forward.

Now, all together, let's say a prayer to Mother, to the Mother of Heaven.

[Recitation of Hail Mary]

May God bless all of you!

DIALOGUE BETWEEN POPE FRANCIS AND CHILDREN

Hello, Pope Francis, I am Jeronimo and I am Colombian. But is it true that peace is always possible?

Thank you for your question, you are good! You are good, thank you!

The question asked by this child... what is your name? [The child answers: Jeronimo]. Jeronimo is his name. He asked a question: "Is it true that peace is always possible?" What do you think? Is peace always possible, or not? [They answer: Yes]. I can't hear you! [They answer: Yes]. Peace is always possible, but how do we make peace? Let us think, for example, about school: I have a problem with another child... [A child says: I say sorry...] But look... you say it, come, come... What must I do when I have a problem with another child? Say it here... [The child answers: I forgive and say I am sorry]. Apologizing and forgiving... and asking... come, come, come... say it, say it here, loud! What must we do? Say it, say it... [The child answers: make peace]. Make

peace... In our neighbourhood, when we play with children at school, at times there is something, some fight, yes or no? [They answer: Yes]. Yes... and is it important to continue the fight? [They answer: No]. I don't understand... [They answer: No]. What must we do? [They answer: we must make peace]. And how do we make peace? [They answer: By forgiving and apologizing]. He says by forgiving and apologizing, but I will show you a gesture of peace. Look carefully, look carefully, give me your hand... this is a gesture of peace. And now I would like you all to make this gesture with the boy or girl next to you. A gesture of peace, all together! All together! This is the gesture of peace! Peace is always possible! Thank you!

Dear Pope Francis, I am Lia Marise and I am from Burundi. In your opinion, what can we children do to make the world better?

The question is, what can I do to make the world better? Answer the questions I will ask you. Pay attention. What can I do to make the world better? Quarrel? [The children answer: No!]. I can't hear you. Quarrel? [They answer: No!]. Talk about it nicely? [They answer: Yes!]. Play together? [They answer: Yes!]. Help others? [They answer: Yes!]. By doing these things, the world will be better. Keep going, and take heart. Good girl. May the Lord bless you.

Hello, Pope Francis. I am Riccardo, a Rom child from Scampia. I would like to ask you, how can we love everyone, everyone, everyone?

Good. Where are you from? [Riccardo: Scampia.]. Take a candy. Ah, the question is a bit difficult, isn't it? How can we love everyone? To love everyone. It is not easy. We must start bit by bit: loving those who are closest, those who are closest to us. And then go on from there. But if I do not love my schoolfriend, if I do not love the boy or girl near me, I cannot move forward. We must start by loving bit by bit. Do you understand? [Riccardo answers: Yes]. Bit by bit. Where are you from? [Riccardo answers: from Scampia]. From Scampia. Good. Thank you. Goodbye!

Hello, Pope Francis. Is it true that we are all brothers and sisters?

It is true, it is true... a very deep question. She asks: "Is it true that we are all brothers and sisters?" Is it true or not? [She answers: Yes, it is true]. It is true. If we are brothers and sisters, are we friends? [They answer: Yes]. I can't hear... [They answer: Yes]. Are we enemies? [They answer: No]. Good! Thank you, thank you!

Good evening, Pope Francis. I am Luis Gabriel and I come from Nicaragua, and I would like to ask you this question: How come some people have neither a home nor work?

Thank you. Take a candy, two or three. It is a very real question. It is not an easy question to answer. Why are there people who have neither a home nor work? I ask you: this, that there are people who have neither home nor work, is it just? [The children answer: No]. I don't understand.

Is it just? [They answer: No!]. This is an injustice, and unfortunately there are many people who have no work, no home, who live in tents. Very often they do not have anything to eat. Today we are happy, but this friend of ours, Luis Gabriel, asks us the question: "Why? Why?". This is the fruit of evil, this is the fruit of selfishness. And this is the fruit of war. If a person tries to climb over the heads of others, is this person good or bad? Are they good or bad? [The children answer: Bad!] I can't hear you. Bad, as you say. And there is a lot of evil and selfishness... Many people, many countries spend money to buy weapons to destroy, and there are people who have nothing to eat. Boys, girls, think about this. There are children who have nothing to eat, there are people who have no work, and this is humanity's fault. I ask you a favour: every day, when you pray, pray for the children who suffer this injustice. Today Luis Gabriel has touched our heart. Let us be silent for a moment, everyone in silence, a little more silence. I can't hear the silence, more silence, more silence. And now, in this silence, each one of you, think about the boys and girls who have nothing to eat. In silence, everyone think. And let us pray to the Lord, that he may help resolve this injustice, for which we are all to blame, to some extent. Thank you, boy, thank you. Take a candy. Good!

Hello, Pope Francis, I am Federico and I am Italian. In the world we should all be equal, but there are children who suffer compared to us; why does this happen? And above all, what can we do to help them?

Thank you, Federico, thank you. It is somewhat a continuation of the earlier question. There are children who do not have basic necessities... we should all be equal, but we are not. Why does this happen? This happens because of selfishness, injustice... This is why you asked the question. This happens because people are selfish, because people are unjust. Thank you, Federico, and it is up to all of us to try to be more just, and to work so that there are not so many injustices in the world. We are all equal, but this unfortunately does not always happen. Thank you, Federico, may the Lord bless you! Take a candy.

Dear Pope, I am [...], I come from Indonesia and I wanted to ask you: If you could perform a miracle, what would you choose?

Good! You are good, eh? If I could perform a miracle, what miracle would I choose? It is easy: that all children have what they need to live, to eat, to play, to go to school. This is the miracle I would like to work. Thank you! Thank you. May all children be happy. Let us pray to the Lord, that he perform this miracle. Thank you.

Hello, Pope Francis, I am Iolanda. I wanted to ask you if it is right that so many elderly people are left alone, and no-one goes to visit them.

And what do you think? Is it right, or is it not right? What do you think? [She answers: It is wrong]. It is wrong, good! Thank you. Take a candy... Do you know that there are many elderly people

who have given their life, who have raised a family, have educated their children, have educated their grandchildren, and are now alone, abandoned in a rest home. I ask you all: is this right, or isn't it? [They answer: It is not right]. I can't hear you... Yes or no? [They answer: No]. It is not right, and this is why we must visit our grandparents, go to visit them, if they are at home, go to see them, and if they are somewhere else, go to visit them... But let me ask you something: Should we leave our grandparents abandoned? [They answer: No]. I can't hear... [They answer: No]. I can't hear... [They answer: No]. Grandparents have given us life, they have transmitted history to us. Grandparents are great! I ask: Should we respect our grandparents? [They answer: Yes]. Should we go and visit our grandparents? [They answer: Yes]. Should we listen to our grandparents? [They answer: Yes]. Now, all together, "*Viva i nonni!*" [The Pope, together with the children, says: "*Viva i nonni!*"] Louder! [The Pope, together with the children, says: "*Viva i nonni!*"].

Hello, Pope Francis, I am Malic and I come from Seychelles. How did you feel when your team won the Football World Cup?

Happy! Happy. But once they won using the hand, and this is not good. When my team wins, I feel happy... For me? From Seychelles? [Malic gives him a gift]. Thank you very much. Thank you. God bless you.

Dear Pope Francis, I am Lucy and I come from Australia. Are you happy to spend time with us children? Why?

Thank you very much! You are from Australia! She asks me if I am happy to spend time with the children, and why. I am truly happy. And I am happy because you are joyful, because you have the joy of hope in the future. Is it true that you are joyful? I can't hear you! Is it true or not? [The children answer: Yes]. Keep going, be brave and continue to be joyful.

Hello, I am Ido Ryu, and I would like to ask you a question, but after the film. [Screening of the short film "Everybody's Home", by the Manetti Bros] How can one open the doors of grown-ups' hearts?

You did well, eh! Take the candy. The question is an intelligent one. She showed us in the film how she was moved by the poverty of poor people sleeping on the street. Her heart was opened. And she has a question: but there are so many people with closed hearts, with hardened hearts, with hearts that look like walls. How do you open the hearts of grown-ups? This is not easy. But you children must keep this in mind, as she did, of doing things that make grown-ups think. She saw a man who was poor, who had no home, who was in the rain, and she gave her clothing to others. You have to set these examples so that grown-ups see this. You must knock on the door of the grown-ups: Dad, Mom, why are there children who have nothing to eat? Dad, Mom, why are there people sleeping on the street? Daddy, Mommy, why are there people who have no work?

You must ask these questions and, actually, you must ask God! God, why this? May the Lord help us. You children can make a real revolution with these questions and with these worries. Keep going, with courage!

Now we must return home joyful because of this meeting, this day. I thank you all, girls, boys, who have come. I thank the organizers who have done a lot, those who have helped. Now, all together, we will receive the blessing in silence. All together. In silence.

[Blessing]

Good evening! A good evening to you all.

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