



The Holy See

Dear Young People,

Before I address you, dear youth of Cagliari and Sardinia, I have the obligation and pleasure to address a special greeting to the President of the Region of Sardinia, Hon. Renato Soru, and also to all the regional authorities, who with their generous contribution and support have permitted the success of this Pastoral Visit of mine. Thank you, Mr President. The young people present here will remember this day, they who are the future of this land, to which you administer with your competence.

And now to you, dear young people. It is a great joy for me to meet you at the end of this brief but intense visit to your beautiful island. I greet you affectionately and thank you for this warm welcome.

In particular I thank those who, in your name, have expressed the fervent sentiments that inspire you. I know that some of you have participated in [World Youth Day in Sydney](#) and I am sure that you have benefited from such an extraordinary ecclesial experience. As I have seen for myself, [World Youth Day](#) constitutes a unique pastoral occasion for allowing youth of the entire world to know each other better, to share together faith and love for Christ and his Church, to confirm the common commitment to strive towards building a future of justice and peace. We have today not a world day, but a Sardinian day, of youth. And we are experiencing the beauty of being together.

And so, truly, I greet you dear young men and women affectionately: you are the future of hope in this region, notwithstanding the difficulties that we all know. I know your enthusiasm, the desires that fuel you, and the commitment you make to accomplish them. And I do not ignore the difficulties and problems you encounter. I am thinking, for example - and we have heard of this - of the wound of unemployment and of the precarious work situation that put your projects at risk. I am thinking of emigration, of the exodus of the most fresh and enterprising energies, with the associated uprooting from one's environment that sometimes brings with it psychological and moral damage, even prior to its social damage. What can be said of the fact that, in the current consumers' society, profit and success have become the new idols before which so many prostrate themselves? The consequence is that it has brought us to give value solely to whom, as is often said, "is lucky" and has "fame", certainly not those whom must laboriously battle with life each day. Possession of material goods and applause of the masses have replaced the work on

oneself that serves to temper the spirit and form an authentic personality. One risks being superficial, taking dangerous short-cuts in the search for success, thus consigning life to experiences that give immediate satisfaction, but are in themselves precarious and misleading. The tendency toward individualism is growing, and when one is concentrated only on oneself, one inevitably becomes fragile; the capacity to listen is weakened, which is an indispensable stage in understanding others and working together.

On 20 October 1985, John Paul II, meeting here in Cagliari young people from all over Sardinia, proposed three important values to build a society of fraternity and solidarity. They are suggestions that are still timely even today, which I willingly repeat, emphasizing in the first place the value of the family, to safeguard as an "ancient and sacred inheritance", the Pope said. You all have experienced the importance of family, as sons and daughters and as siblings; but the capacity to form a new one cannot be taken for granted. You must prepare yourselves for it. In the past traditional society helped to form and safeguard the family more. Today it is no longer so, or rather it is "on paper", but in actuality a different mentality dominates. Other forms of living together are permitted. Sometimes the term "family" is used for unions that, in reality, are not a family. Above all, in our context, the capacity for couples to defend the unity of the family nucleus is very reduced and at the cost of great sacrifice. Dear youth, recover the value of the family. Love it, not only as a tradition, but as a mature and conscious choice. Love the family in which you were born and prepare yourselves to love also those that with God's help you yourselves will make. I say "prepare yourselves", because real love does not happen suddenly. Beyond sentiment, love is made of responsibility, constancy and a sense of duty. One learns all of this through the prolonged practice of the Christian virtues of trust, purity, abandonment to Providence and prayer. In this commitment of growth toward a mature love the Christian community will always support you, because in it the family finds its highest dignity. The [Second Vatican Council](#) calls it a "little church" because Matrimony is a Sacrament, that is, a holy and efficacious sign of the love that God gives us in Christ through the Church.

Strictly connected to this first value I mentioned is the other value I wish to emphasize: *serious intellectual and moral formation*, indispensable in planning and building your future and that of society. The person who offers you a "discount" on this is not concerned for your good. In fact, how could one seriously plan a future if the natural desire that is in you to understand and to compare yourselves is neglected? The crisis of a society begins when it no longer knows how to hand down its cultural patrimony and its fundamental values to the new generations. I am not referring only and simply to the scholastic system. The issue is broader. There is, as we know, an educational emergency, which in order to be faced requires parents and teachers capable of sharing all the goodness and truth that they have experienced deeply first-hand. It requires young people who are open to their internal lives, curious to learn and to bring everything back to the fundamental needs and yearnings of the heart. You are truly free - in other words, impassioned for the truth. The Lord Jesus said: "the truth will set you free" (Jn 8: 32). Modern nihilism instead preaches the opposite, that it is instead freedom which will make you true. Indeed, there are those

who hold that no truth exists, thus opening the path to the disposal of the concepts of good and evil and even making them interchangeable. I was told that in the Sardinian culture there is this proverb: "It is better to want for bread than for justice". Man can indeed withstand and overcome the pangs of hunger, but he cannot live where justice and truth are banished. Material bread is not enough, it is not sufficient to live in a fully human way; another food for which to always hunger is necessary, food which nourishes one's personal growth and that of the family and of society.

This food, and it is the third great value, is *a sincere and deep faith*, which becomes the substance of your life. When the sense of the presence of God is lost, everything is "tasteless" and reduces to a single dimension. All the rest is "crushed" on the material level. When each thing is considered only for its usefulness, the essence of that which surrounds us is no longer perceived, and above all of the persons whom we meet. With the disappearance of the mystery of God the mystery of all that exists disappears too; things and people interest me in so much as they satisfy my needs, not for what they are. All of this constitutes a cultural fact that one breathes from birth and that produces permanent interior effects. Faith, in this sense, before being a religious belief, is a way of seeing reality, a way of thinking, an interior sensitivity that enriches the human person as such. Well, dear friends, Christ is also the Teacher of this, because he has completely shared in our humanity and is contemporaneous with man of every epoch. This typically Christian reality is a stupendous grace! Being with Jesus, visiting him like a friend in the Gospel and in the Sacraments, you can all learn, in a new way, what society often is not able to give you, that is, a religious sense. And precisely because it is something new, discovering it is wonderful.

Dear friends, like the young St Augustine, with all his problems on his difficult path, each one of you, every creature, hears the symbolic call from above; every beautiful creature is attracted back to the beauty of the Creator, who is effectively concentrated in the Face of Jesus Christ. When the soul experiences this, it exclaims, "Late have I loved you, o beauty ever ancient ever new, late have I loved you!" (*Conf. X, 27.38*). May each one of you rediscover God as the sense and foundation of every creature, light of truth, flame of charity, bond of unity, like the hymn of the *Agorà* of the Italian youth. May you be docile to the power of the Spirit! He, the Holy Spirit, the Protagonist of the [World Youth Day at Sydney](#); he makes you witnesses of Christ. Not in word but in deed, with a new type of life. You will not be afraid any longer to lose your freedom, because you will live it fully by giving it away in love. You will no longer be attached to material goods, because you will feel within you the joy of sharing them. You will cease to be sad with the sadness of the world, but you will feel sorrow at evil and rejoice at goodness, especially for mercy and forgiveness. And if this happens, if you will have truly discovered God in the Face of Christ, you will no longer think of the Church as an institution external to you, but as your spiritual family, as we are living now, at this moment. This is the faith that your forefathers have handed down to you. This is the faith you are called to live today, in very different times.

Family, formation and faith. Here, dear young people of Cagliari and of the whole of Sardinia, I too, like Pope John Paul II, leave to you these three words, three values to make your own with the

light and the strength of the Spirit of Christ. May Our Lady of Bonaria, First Patroness and sweet Queen of the Sardinian people, guide you, protect you and accompany you always! With affection I bless you, assuring you of a daily remembrance in prayer.