



The Holy See

XXXIX WORLD YOUTH DAY

HOLY MASS

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

*Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe
Saint Peter's Basilica - Sunday, 24 November 2024*

[Multimedia]

At the end of the liturgical year, the Church celebrates the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the universe. This celebration invites us to look towards him, the Lord, the source and fulfilment of all things (cf. *Col 1:16-17*), whose “kingdom shall not be destroyed” (*Dan 7:14*).

As we contemplate Christ the King, we are uplifted and moved. However, what we see around us is quite different, and this contrast may make disturbing questions arise in our hearts. What are we to make of so many wars, the ongoing violence and natural disasters? What can be said about the many problems that you, dear young people, must face as you look towards the future: the scarcity of job opportunities, uncertainty about the state of the economy, the rise of inequalities that polarize our society? Why is all this happening? And how can we avoid being overwhelmed? It is true that these are challenging questions but they are important ones.

Today, as the Church celebrates World Youth Day, I would like to encourage you to reflect, in the light of the Word of God, on three ideas that can help us face these challenges courageously. These three ideas are: *accusations*, *approval* and *truth*.

First: *accusations*. In today's Gospel, Jesus is being accused (cf. *Jn 18:33-37*). He is, as they say, “on the witness stand” in court. Pilate, an official of the Roman Empire, is questioning Jesus. This can be taken as an image representing all the powers that have violently oppressed peoples

throughout the course of history. Although Pilate personally had no interest in Jesus, he also knew that the people followed him, believing him to be a guide, a teacher, the Messiah. The procurator could not allow any disturbance or turmoil to threaten the “forced peace” of his district, so he resolved to placate the powerful enemies of this defenceless prophet. He put Jesus on trial and threatened to condemn him to death. The Lord, who had always preached justice, mercy and forgiveness, was not afraid. He did not allow himself to be intimidated; he did not rebel. Jesus was faithful to the truth he proclaimed, faithful to the point of sacrificing his life.

Dear young people, perhaps you also feel “accused” at times for following Jesus. At school, or among your friends and acquaintances, some may try to make you think that your faithfulness to the Gospel and its values is a mistake, because it keeps you from conforming to the crowd and blending in. Do not be afraid of their “condemnations”! Have no worries; sooner or later, their criticism will fall through, their condemnations will prove false, and their superficial values will be revealed for what they are: illusions. Dear young people, be careful not to get carried away by illusions. Please be concrete because reality is concrete. Beware of illusions.

What endures, as Christ teaches us, is quite different: the work of love. That is what remains and makes life beautiful! The rest will fade away. Love is made concrete in works. Therefore, I repeat: do not be afraid of the “condemnations” of the world. Keep on loving! But love according to the light of the Lord; by giving your life to help others.

This brings us to the second point: *approval*. Jesus says: “My kingdom is not of this world” (*Jn* 18:36). What does Jesus mean by this statement? “My kingdom is not of this world”. Why does he not do anything to ensure his success, to garner up the support of the authorities, to get approval for his programme? Why does he not do it? How can he expect to change things if he has been “defeated”? Jesus behaves in this way because he rejects the mentality of power (cf. *Mk* 10:42-45). Jesus is free from it!

Dear young people, you too would do well to follow his example. Do not allow yourself to be dragged along by the need to be seen, approved of and praised. Those who get caught up in this frenzy experience anxiety. They end up pushing others around, falling into rivalries, being disingenuous, giving into peer pressure and compromising just to gain a bit of recognition and visibility. Please be careful, your dignity is not for sale. It is not for sale! Be careful.

God loves you just as you are, and not as you appear. Before him, the innocence of your dreams is worth more than success and fame, and the sincerity of your intentions is worth more than worldly approval. Do not be deceived by those who seek to lure you with vain promises, but only want to manipulate you and use you for their own interests. Beware of being exploited. Be careful not to be conditioned. Be free, but free in harmony with your dignity. Do not settle for being “stars for a day” on social media or in any other context! I recall an occasion when a young woman wanted to be noticed, even though she was pretty, she put on all her make-up before going to the

party. I thought, “after the make-up, what is left?” Do not put make-up over your soul and do not put make-up over your heart. Be as you are: sincere and transparent. Do not be ‘stars for a day’ on social media or in any other context. You are called to shine in a wider sky. In heaven, the infinite love of the Father is reflected in many little lights. His love is revealed in us through the faithful affection between spouses, the innocent joy of children, the enthusiasm of young people, caring for the elderly, the generosity of consecrated persons, the charity shown towards the poor and the honesty upheld in work environments. Think of the things that will make you strong. These little lights of: the faithful affection of spouses - a beautiful thing -; the innocent joy of children - this is a beautiful joy! -; the enthusiasm of young people - be enthusiastic, all of you! -; and care for the elderly. I ask you: do you care for the elderly? Do you visit your grandparents? Be generous in your lives and charitable to the poor, and honest in your work. This is the true firmament where we shine like stars in the world (cf. *Phil* 2:15). Please do not listen to those who lie to you! No approval you receive can save the world or make you happy. Only the free gift of love can bring us happiness. What saves the world is the free gift of love. Love cannot be bought, it cannot be sold: it is gratuitous, it is a giving of oneself.

This brings us to the third point: *truth*. Christ came into the world “to bear witness to the truth” (*Jn* 18:37), and he did so by teaching us to love God and our brothers and sisters (cf. *Mt* 22:34-40; 1 *Jn* 4:6-7). Only in love does our existence find light and meaning (cf. 1 *Jn* 2:9-11). Otherwise, we remain prisoners of a great lie. What is this big lie? That of self-sufficiency, the ‘I’ that is self-sufficient (cf. *Gen* 3:4-5). This type of selfishness is the root of all injustice and unhappiness. It is the ‘I’ that turns in on itself - I, me, with me, always ‘me’ - and it does not have the ability to see others or to talk to them. Beware of this disease of the ‘I’ turned in on itself.

Christ, who is the way, the truth and the life (cf. *Jn* 14:6), by stripping himself of everything and dying on the cross for our salvation, teaches us that only in love can we live, grow and flourish in our full dignity (cf. *Eph* 4:15-16). Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati — a young man like you — once wrote to a friend, saying that, without love we no longer live, but we simply get by (cf. *Letter to Isidoro Bonini*, 27 February 1925). We want to live, not just get by. That is why we must strive to bear witness to the truth in charity, loving one another as Jesus taught us (cf. *Jn* 15:12).

Sisters and brothers, it is not true, as some think, that world events have “escaped” God’s control. It is not true that history is written by oppressors, tyrants and the proud. Although many of the evils that afflict us are the work of men who have been deceived by the Evil One, everything is ultimately subject to the judgement of God. Those who oppress people, who make wars, what will their faces look like when they stand before the Lord? “Why did you start that war? Why did you commit murder?” How will they respond? Let us think about that, and about us too. We do not start wars and we do not kill, but I did commit this or that sin. When the Lord will say to us, “But why did you do this? Why have you been unjust in this way? Why did you spend money on your vanity?” The Lord will also ask us these things. The Lord gives us freedom, but he does not abandon us. He corrects us when we fall, but he never ceases to love us. If we wish, he picks us up so we can

continue our journey with joy.

At the end of this Eucharist, the Portuguese youth will entrust to the Korean youth the symbols of WYD: the cross and the icon of Mary *Salus Populi Romani*. This, too, is a sign. It is an invitation to all of us to live out the Gospel and take it to every part of the world, without stopping, without being discouraged, getting up after every fall and never ceasing to hope. Indeed, the theme of the message for today's celebration is: "Those who hope in the Lord shall run and not be weary" (cf. *Is* 40:31). You, young Koreans, will receive the Cross of Our Lord, the Cross of life, the sign of victory, but you are not alone: you will receive it along with our Mother. It is Mary who always accompanies us on our journey towards Jesus. It is Mary who in difficult moments is beside our Cross to help us, because she is our Mother, she is mum. Keep Mary in mind.

Let us keep our gaze fixed on Jesus, on his Cross and on Mary, our Mother. In this way, even throughout our difficulties, we will find the strength to go forward, without fear of *accusations*, without the need for *approval*, based on your own dignity, with your own security of being saved and being accompanied by Mother Mary. Without making compromises and without spiritual make-up. Your dignity needs no make-up. Let us go forward, happy to live for others, to be in love, and to be witnesses of the truth. Please do not lose your joy. Thank you.

Words spoken by the Holy Father during the passage of the WYD symbols

I would like to greet all of the young people present today, and those around the world, especially the delegation from Portugal, where last year's World Youth Day took place, and the delegation from South Korea, which will organise the next one in Seoul in 2027. Soon the Portuguese youth will hand over the symbols of WYD – the Cross and the icon of Mary *Salus Populi Romani* – to the Korean youth. These symbols were entrusted to young people by Saint John Paul II so that they could take them around the world.

And you, dear young Koreans, now it is your turn! By carrying the Cross in Asia you proclaim the love of Christ to all. Take courage! Have the courage to bear witness to the hope that we need more than ever. Wherever these symbols go, may the certainty of God's unfailing love and fraternity between peoples spread and grow. For all the young victims of conflicts and wars, may the Cross of Our Lord and the icon of the Blessed Virgin Mary be a source of support and consolation.