



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF HOLY FATHER FRANCIS
TO YOUNG LITHUANIANS
ON THE OCCASION OF THE "SIXTH NATIONAL YOUTH DAY"
OF LITHUANIA CELEBRATED IN KAUNAS
[28-30 JUNE 2013]**

"I have called you friends" (Jn 15:15)

Dear Young Lithuanians,

I am really glad to make myself spiritually present among you and to address my affectionate greeting to you on the occasion of the Sixth Youth Day which has brought so many of you together in Kaunas. I address a special thought to those of you who have taken the path of full dedication to God in the priesthood and in the consecrated life, as well as to all who are involved in serving the lowliest in one of the many forms of volunteer service. I greet and thank your Pastors, who have planned these special days of prayer and reflection centred on the theme "I have called you friends" (Jn 15:15). Starting from this word of the Lord I would like to offer you a few brief thoughts for your spiritual development and for your mission in the Church and in the world. Jesus wants to be your friend, your brother, a teacher of truth and life who reveals to you the route to follow in order to reach happiness, the fulfilment of yourselves in accordance with God's plan for each one of you. And Jesus' friendship, which brings us the mercy and love of God, is "free", a pure gift. He asks nothing of you in exchange, he only asks you to welcome him. Jesus wants to love you for what you are, even in your frailty and weakness, so that moved by his love, you may be renewed.

The encounter with God's love in Christ's friendship is possible first of all in the sacraments, and in particular in the Eucharist and in Reconciliation. In Holy Mass we celebrate the memorial of the Lord's sacrifice, his total gift of himself for our salvation: still today he really gives his Body for us and pours out his Blood to redeem humanity's sins and to bring us into communion with him. In Penance, Jesus accepts us with all our limitations, he brings us the mercy of the Father who

forgives us and transforms our heart, making it a new heart that can love as he does, as he who loved his own to the end (cf. Jn 13:1). Moreover this love is expressed in his mercy. Jesus always pardons us.

Another good way to grow in friendship with Christ is by listening to his word. The Lord speaks to us in the depths of our conscience, he speaks to us through Sacred Scripture, he speaks to us in prayer. Learn to stay before him in silence. to read and meditate on the Bible, especially the Gospels, to converse with him every day in order to feel his presence of friendship and love. Here I would like to emphasize the beauty of a simple contemplative prayer, accessible to all, great and small, the educated and those with little education. It is the prayer of the Holy Rosary. In the Rosary we turn to the Virgin Mary so that she may guide us to an ever closer union with her Son Jesus to bring us into conformity with him, to have his sentiments and to behave like him. Indeed, in the Rosary while we repeat the *Hail Mary* we meditate on the Mysteries, on the events of Christ's life, so as to know and love him ever better. The Rosary is an effective means for opening ourselves to God, for it helps us to overcome egotism and to bring peace to hearts, in the family, in society and in the world.

Dear young people, Christ's love and his friendship are not an illusion — Jesus on the Cross shows how real they are — nor are they the privilege of a few. You will discover this friendship and feel its full fruitfulness and beauty if you seek it with sincerity, open yourselves to him with trust, cultivate your spiritual life with perseverance, receiving the sacraments, meditating on Sacred Scripture, praying assiduously, and living with deep involvement in the Christian community. May you feel a living part of the Church, committed to evangelization, in union with your brothers and sisters in the faith and in communion with your Pastors. Do not be afraid to live out faith! Be witnesses of Christ in your daily environment, with simplicity and courage. Above all may you be able to show those you meet, your peers, the Face of mercy and the love of God who always forgives, encourages and imbues hope. May you always be attentive to the other, especially to people who are poorer and weaker, living and bearing witness to brotherly love, to counter all forms of selfishness and withdrawal. May your Patron St Casimir help you never to tire in seeking and sharing Christ. May the motherly presence of Mary sustain you on this journey, and may you be accompanied by my Blessing, which I warmly impart to you all, extending it to the whole of Lithuania.

From the Vatican, 21 June 2013.

FRANCIS
