



The Holy See

**AUDIO MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE 37th ANNUAL WALKING PILGRIMAGE
FROM MACERATA TO LORETO
[6 JUNE 2015]**

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good evening!

It is a pleasure for me to address these words to you on this 37th Macerata-Loreto walking pilgrimage. I have done so the past two years; and your strength, your faith, your love for Jesus Christ makes me glad. The other day at the General Audience, I blessed the torch; there were a few of you who brought it.

I want to tell you that I am close to you, that I am close to this pilgrimage!

Pilgrimage is a symbol of life. It makes us imagine that life is about walking, it is a walk. Should a person not walk, and stand still, he is not of service, she does nothing. Consider water, when water isn't in a river, it doesn't go ahead, but stands still; it goes bad. A soul that doesn't walk through life by doing good, by doing many things that one must do for society, to help others, and also who doesn't walk through life seeking God and for the Holy Spirit to move from within, is a soul that ends up in mediocrity and spiritual poverty. Please: do not stand still in life!

It can happen: we have all had falls, mistakes in life; but if you have made a mistake, get up right away and keep walking. "Sing and walk", St Augustine said to his faithful; Walk with joy and also walk when the heart is sad, but keep walking. And should you need to stand still, which would be to rest a bit and catch your breath in order to go on afterwards. Sing and walk! Always, sing and walk! There is also the danger of going the wrong way. Those who walk can go the wrong way; this can happen to each of us, and how often have we done this? Should you go the wrong way, go back. Go back, because Jesus is merciful.

You are making this pilgrimage: "Caressed by mercy". The mercy of Jesus forgives all, he always waits for you, always loves you so much. Each of you knows your own story. We all know it, our own. "Father, I have fallen so many times". That beautiful song of the mountain climbers comes to mind: the art of climbing lies not in falling but in not staying down. Sing and walk and should you fall, get up: there is the merciful caress of Jesus who forgives all, and there is joy, the joy of the encounter with Jesus.

In this long nighttime event, in this night of walking, think about your life. What do I have to do in my life? What does Jesus say that I must make of my life? What does the Lord have in mind for me? Is there joy in my heart, to sing while I walk? If there is no joy, search for it! The Lord will give it to you, He will give it to you through His mercy.

Dear brothers and sisters, you are making this journey, I am thinking of you. This evening I will pray for you, I will accompany you spiritually from Sarajevo to Rome, because I will return to Rome this evening. I will be with you, and you, please, pray for me. May the Lord bless you and Our Lady protect you. May the Guardian Angel of each one of you speak in your ear: "Sing and walk!".

Until next time!