



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS TO THE ITALIAN CATHOLIC ACTION

*Paul VI Audience Hall
Saturday, 3 May 2014*

Video

Dear Friends of Catholic Action,

I welcome all of you, who represent this beautiful ecclesial reality! I greet the participants at the National Assembly, the parish presidents, priest assistants and friends of Catholic Action from other countries. I greet President Franco Miano, whom I thank for his report, and the new General Assistant, Bishop Mansueto Bianchi, to whom I offer my best wishes for this new mission, and his predecessor Bishop Domenico Sigalini, who worked so hard. I thank him for the dedication with which he served Catholic Action for so many years. A special greeting goes to Cardinal Angelo Bagnasco, President of the Italian Episcopal Conference, and the Secretary General, Bishop Nunzio Galantino.

The theme of your Assembly “New people in Jesus Christ, co-responsible for the joy of living” fits well within the Easter Season, which is a season of joy. It is the joy of the disciples in encountering the Risen Christ and it needs to be interiorized within an evangelizing style capable of influencing life. In the current social and ecclesial context, you, the laity of Catholic Action, are called to renew the missionary option, open to the horizons that the Spirit points out to the Church and the expression of a rejuvenated lay apostolate. This missionary option: everything must be missionary, everything. It is the paradigm of Catholic Action: the missionary paradigm. This is the choice that Catholic Action makes today. Above all the parishes, especially those visibly tired and withdrawn — and there are many. Tired parishes, closed parishes... there are many! When I greet parish secretaries, I ask them: Are you a secretary to those who open doors or those who close the door? These parishes need your apostolic enthusiasm, your complete availability and your

creative service. It is about assuming missionary dynamism in order to reach everyone, putting first those who feel distant and the most vulnerable and forgotten people. It means opening the doors and letting Jesus go forth. Many times we keep Jesus closed inside the parishes with us, and we do not go out and we do not let Him leave! Open the doors so He can go out, at least Him! It is about a Church which “goes forth”: a Church which always goes forth.

This style of evangelization, driven by a passionate interest in the life of the people, is especially suited to Catholic Action formed by a diocesan lay apostolate that lives in close co-responsibility with its Pastors. Here the popularity of your Association is a great help, because it is able to combine its intra-ecclesial endeavours with its contribution to the transformation of society in order to direct it towards the good. I thought I would give you three verbs which can serve to trace out a path for all of you.

The first is: to remain. But do not remain closed, no. To remain, in what sense? To remain *with* Jesus, to remain to enjoy his company. To be proclaimers and witnesses of Christ we must first remain close to Him. It is from meeting Him, who is our life and our joy, that our testimony gains new meaning and new strength everyday. Remaining *in* Jesus, remaining *with* Jesus.

The second verb: to go. Please, never let Catholic Action be stationery! Do not stop: go! Go forth into the streets of your cities and countries, and proclaim that God is Father and that Jesus Christ has enabled you to know him, and for this reason your life has changed. You can live as brothers and sisters, bearing within you a hope that does not disappoint. May there be in each of you the desire make the Word of God run to the borders, thus renewing your commitment to meet man wherever he may be found, there where he suffers, there where he hopes, there where he loves and believes, there where his most profound aspirations are, the real questions, his heartfelt desires. Jesus is expecting you there. This means going forth. This means: to go out, to be outgoing.

And then lastly: to rejoice. Always rejoice and exult in the Lord! Be people who sing life, who sing faith. This is important: not only to recite the Creed, to recite the faith, to understand the faith but to sing the faith! There it is. To speak about the faith, to live the faith with joy; this is called “singing the faith”. And I am not the first to say it! St Augustine said it 1,600 years ago: “sing the faith”! Be people who can recognize their own talents and their own limits, who know how to see over the course of their days — even the darkest — the signs of the Lord’s presence. Rejoice because the Lord has called you to be co-responsible in the mission of His Church. Rejoice because you are not alone on this journey. The Lord is there and he is with you. There are your Bishops and priests who sustain you. There are your parish communities, your diocesan communities with whom you can share the journey. You are not alone!

With these three attitudes: to remain in Jesus, to go to the borders and to live the joy of Christian belonging, you can carry forward your vocation and avoid the temptation to be “static”, which has

nothing to do with remaining in Jesus; avoid the temptation to withdraw and that of intimism, so hackneyed; intimism is so sweet it's disgusting.... And if you go forth, you will not fall into this temptation. And also avoid the temptation of formal seriousness. By staying in Jesus, going to the borders, living joy and avoiding these temptations, you will avoid carrying forward a life that resembles more that of a statue in a museum than that of people called by Jesus to live and spread the joy of the Gospel. If you want to listen to the advice of your General Assistant — who is so mild because he has a gentle name, he is Mansueto! — if you want to follow his advice, please be donkeys but never statues in a museum, never!

Let us ask the Lord, each of us, for eyes that know how to see beyond appearance; ears that know how to listen to cries, whispers and also silence; hands able to support, embrace and minister. Most of all let us ask for a great and merciful heart that desires the good and salvation of all. May Mary Immaculate and my blessing accompany you on your journey. And I thank you because I know you pray for me!

Now I ask you to pray to Our Lady, who is our Mother, who will accompany us on this journey. Our Lady always followed Jesus, to the end she accompanied him. Let us pray to her that she may always accompany us on our path: this path of joy, this path of going on: this journey of staying with Jesus.