



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO INDONESIA, PAPUA NEW GUINEA,
TIMOR-LESTE AND SINGAPORE
(2-13 September 2024)

INTERRELIGIOUS MEETING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS

"Catholic Junior College" (Singapore)
Friday, 13 September 2024

[Multimedia]

Thank you very much for your words!

Three things that you said struck me: "armchair critics," "comfort zone," and "technology" – the duty to use it but also the risks involved. This is the speech that I had prepared, but now I will speak [spontaneously]!

Young people are courageous and like to seek the truth but they have to be careful not to become what you referred to as "armchair critics" with endless words. A young person must be a critical thinker, and it is not good never to be critical. But you must be constructive in criticism, because there is a destructive criticism, which only makes a lot of complaints but does not offer a new way forward. I ask all young people, each of you: are you critical thinkers? Do you have the courage to criticize but also the courage to let others criticize you? Because, if you criticize, then someone else will criticize you. This is sincere dialogue between young people.

Young people must have the courage to build, to move forward and go out of their "comfort zones". A young person who chooses always to spend his or her time in "comfort" is a young

person who becomes fat! Not fatter in body, but fatter in mind! That is why I say to young people, "Take risks, go out! Do not be afraid!". Fear is a dictatorial attitude that paralyzes you. It is true that young people often make mistakes, many mistakes, and it would be good if each one of us – if each of you – could think about how many times you have made mistakes. We make mistakes because we started walking and we make mistakes on the journey. This is normal; the important thing to realize is that you have made mistakes. Let us see who can answer my question: What is worse, making a mistake because I started to walk or not making a mistake because I stayed at home? Everyone, the latter! A young person who does not take risks, who is afraid of making mistakes, is already old! Do you understand this?

You have also talked about the media. Today there are so many options, so many possibilities for using the media, cell phone, or television. I would like to ask you: is it good to use media or is it not good? Let us think about this. What is a young person who does not use media like? He or she is closed. What about young people who live totally enslaved to the media, what are they like? They are lost. All young people should use the media, but in a manner that can help us move forward, not in a way that can enslave us. Understood? Do you agree or disagree?

One of the things that has impressed me most about the young people here is your capacity for interfaith dialogue. This is very important because if you start arguing, "My religion is more important than yours...", or "Mine is the true one, yours is not true....," where does this lead? Somebody answer. [A young person answers, "Destruction".] That is correct. All religions are paths to God. I will use an analogy, they are like different languages that express the divine. But God is for everyone, and therefore, we are all God's children. "But my God is more important than yours!". Is this true? There is only one God, and religions are like languages, paths to reach God. Some Sikh, some Muslim, some Hindu, some Christian. Understood? Yet, interfaith dialogue among young people takes courage. The age of youth is the age of courage, but you can misuse this courage to do things that will not help you. Instead, you should have courage to move forward and to dialogue.

One thing that helps a lot with dialogue is respect. I will tell you one thing. I don't know if it happens here, in this city, but in other cities it happens that among young people something bad occurs: bullying. I ask you: who is the bravest to tell me what they think about bullying? [Some young people respond] Thank you! Everyone has provided a definition of bullying but with a different aspect. Whether it is verbal or physical bullying, it is always an aggression. Always. Just think about what happens in schools or children's groups: bullying targets those who are weaker. For example, a disabled boy or girl. Instead, we saw here this beautiful dance with disabled children! Each one of us has our own abilities and limitations. Do we all have abilities? [Answer: "Yes!"] Do we all have some limitations? [Answer: "Yes!"] Even the Pope? Yes, all, all! As we have our limitations, we must respect the disabilities of others. Do you agree? This is important. Why do I say this? Because overcoming these things helps in your interfaith dialogue since it is built upon respect for others. This is very important.

Any further questions? No? I want to thank you and repeat what Raaj told us: to do everything we can so as to maintain a courageous attitude and promote a space where young people can go and dialogue. This is because your dialogue is one that creates a path, and that leads the way forward. If you dialogue as young people, you will also dialogue as adults; you will dialogue as citizens, and as politicians. I would like to tell you something about history: with every dictatorship in history, the first thing it does is to cut off dialogue.

I thank you for these questions, and I am glad to meet you young people, to meet these brave, almost “shameless ones,” you are good! My wish is that all of you young people will go forward with hope, and not go backwards! Take risks! Otherwise, you will grow “fatter”! God bless you and pray for me, I do for you.

And now, in silence, let us pray for each other. In silence.

May God bless all of us. In the future, when you are no longer young, but you are elderly and grandparents, teach all these things to your children. God bless you and pray for me, don't forget! But pray for, not against!