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PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS

# **BOLLETTINO**

SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

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## **Audience with a delegation of young people from Italian Catholic Action**

This morning, in the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience a representation from Italian Catholic Action Youth for the exchange of Christmas wishes.

The following is the Pope's greeting to those present at the audience:

### **Greeting of the Holy Father**

Dear boys and girls, welcome!

For me it is a joy to meet you on this Christmas occasion, and especially this one [referring to a child]: he is courageous, he will have good fortune in life! Let him go, let him go in peace... I like him. Look: he has initiative, he has courage, he is one who is looking for unknown things. Boys and girls, this is what you have to be like: to go ahead with courage!

Here with you are the national president of Italian Catholic Action, Professor Giuseppe Notarstefano, the general assistant, Msgr. Gualtiero Sigismondi, together with the national leaders and some educators. I offer them my heartfelt greeting, and through them I thank the many people who are generously committed to your formation, dedicating their time and resources to the Association.

Your journey in faith this year is expressed by the slogan *Su misura per te* ("Made to measure for you") inspired by tailoring. I like this theme, which brings to mind clothing made to measure, with accessories adapted to the various people. It is beautiful because each of us is a unique person. There are no two the same, no: each one is unique! We are not photocopies: we are all original! And the bad thing is when we want to imitate others and we do the things that other people do, and we become photocopies instead of originals. This is bad. Each person must defend his or her own originality. Blessed Carlo Acutis, your peer, used to repeat this often. And indeed, it is important that each of us, every day, joyfully wears the "dress" of his or her originality, of his or her personality. Just think, in history there is no one and there will never be anyone like you, like you, like you... We

are all different. Each one of you is a unique and unrepeatable beauty. And when one of you does bad things, each one is a unique and unrepeatable bad deed. Each one of you is original, both in good and bad ways!

This is how Jesus sees you; he loves you as you are, even though some of you do not consider yourselves thus, and think you count for little. Jesus, who came into the world as a child, believes in a world on a child's scale, made to measure for each person. He made this understood by being born in Bethlehem. But today too he draws close to the young people of every country and every people, and he does so every day. This is God's style, which can be described in three words: closeness, compassion and tenderness. This, and not another, is the style of God.

Dear friends, in the face of Jesus who makes himself our neighbour, let us also learn to be "beside", beside others: beside family members, friends, peers, those in need. We can always do something for others without waiting for others to do something for us. We can always be missionaries of the Gospel, and be so everywhere, starting from the environments in which we live: in the family, at school, in the parish, in sports and entertainment venues. But to do this, to take on the style of Jesus, to be his witnesses, you must first be with him, make room for him in your day. And I ask each one of you, boys and girls: do you make room for Jesus in your day, in your work, in your study, in your rest, in your sport? Does Jesus enter there? Do not be afraid to devote time to him in prayer, that is, to talk to him – with Jesus – about your friends, to ask him for help in difficult times, to tell him when you are happy and when you are sad. And Jesus will make you grow in that nobility that a person has when they take upon themselves their own measure.

Today I received the biography of a young man, who gave his life - 20 years - for his country: Gino Pistoni. His cause of beatification is in progress. And he offered his life with his blood, written with his blood... And I immediately thought of you: I will take him to the audience to talk to them about this boy. May your life... May each one of you give your life, but well, with everything: express yourself as he expressed himself with his blood, express yourself with everything you have.

Jesus gives a full joy to the heart, because only He is capable of making the adventure of life ever new. He never forgets about you; we are the ones who forget about him, this always happens. He is always ready to encourage you and never stops believing in you. He gives you energy, he gives you courage every time you go to meet him at Mass, and he looks upon you with joy, especially when you make gestures of sharing and solidarity towards others, when you are able to be close to those who are alone, without friends, in difficulty; to those who suffer, and unfortunately there are many of your peers who suffer. Think of them, think: of those young people whom you do not know, but there are many of them who suffer. Carry them in your heart to speak about them to Jesus. Take courage! Take courage in your journey of life. Jesus is counting on you!

I thank you and wish you a happy and holy Christmas. Thank you! Merry Christmas to your families and to the whole of Catholic Action. I bless you from my heart, and I ask you to pray for me.

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