



Text of addresses by Pope Francis during World Youth Day 2016

27 July 2016 - Wawel Meeting with the Authorities, the Civil Society and Diplomatic Corps

Mr President, Honourable Authorities, Distinguished Members of the Diplomatic Corps, University Rectors, Ladies and Gentlemen, I offer a respectful greeting to His Excellency the President, and I thank him for his gracious welcome and kind words. I am pleased to greet the distinguished members of Government and Parliament, the University Rectors, the regional and municipal Authorities, as well as members of the Diplomatic Corps and the other authorities present. This is my first visit to central-eastern Europe and I am happy to begin with Poland, the homeland of the unforgettable Saint John Paul II, originator and promoter of the World Youth Days.

Pope John Paul liked to speak of a Europe that breathes with two lungs. The ideal of a new European humanism is inspired by the creative and coordinated breathing of these two lungs, together with the shared civilization that has its deepest roots in Christianity. Memory is the hallmark of the Polish people. I was always impressed by Pope John Paul's vivid sense of history. Whenever he spoke about a people, he started from its history, in order to bring out its wealth of humanity and spirituality.

A consciousness of one's own identity, free of any pretensions to superiority, is indispensable for establishing a national community on the foundation of its human, social, political, economic and religious heritage, and thus inspiring social life and culture in a spirit of constant fidelity to tradition and, at the same time, openness to renewal and the future. In this sense, you recently celebrated the 1,050th anniversary of the Baptism of Poland. That was indeed a powerful moment of national unity, which reaffirmed that harmony, even amid a diversity of opinions, is the sure path to achieving the common good of the entire Polish people. Similarly, fruitful cooperation in the international sphere and mutual esteem grow through awareness of, and respect for, one's own identity and that of others. Dialogue cannot exist unless each party starts out from its own identity.

In the daily life of each individual and society, though, there are two kinds of memory: good and bad, positive and negative. Good memory is what the Bible shows us in the Magnificat, the canticle of Mary, who praises the Lord and his saving works. Negative memory, on the other hand, keeps the mind and heart obsessively fixed on evil, especially the wrongs committed by others.

Looking at your recent history, I thank God that you have been able to let good memory have the upper hand, for example, by celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the forgiveness mutually offered and accepted between the Polish and German episcopates, following the Second World War. That initiative, which initially involved the ecclesial communities, also sparked an irreversible social, political, cultural and religious process that changed the history of relationships



between the two peoples. Here too we can think of the Joint Declaration between the Catholic Church in Poland and the Orthodox Church of Moscow: an act that inaugurated a process of rapprochement and fraternity not only between the two Churches, but also between the two peoples.

The noble Polish nation has thus shown how one can nurture good memory while leaving the bad behind. This requires a solid hope and trust in the One who guides the destinies of peoples, opens closed doors, turns problems into opportunities and creates new scenarios from situations that appeared hopeless. This is evident from Poland's own historical experience. After the storms and dark times, your people, having regained its dignity, could say, like the Jews returning from Babylon, "We were like those who dream... our mouth was filled with laughter and our tongues with shouts of joy" (Ps 126:1-2).

An awareness of the progress made and joy at goals achieved, become in turn a source of strength and serenity for facing present challenges. These call for the courage of truth and constant ethical commitment, to ensure that decisions and actions, as well as human relationships, will always be respectful of the dignity of the person. In this, every sphere of action is involved, including the economy, environmental concerns and the handling of the complex phenomenon of migration. This last area calls for great wisdom and compassion, in order to overcome fear and to achieve the greater good.

There is a need to seek out the reasons for emigration from Poland and to facilitate the return of all those wishing to repatriate. Also needed is a spirit of readiness to welcome those fleeing from wars and hunger, and solidarity with those deprived of their fundamental rights, including the right to profess one's faith in freedom and safety.

At the same time, new forms of exchange and cooperation need to be developed on the international level in order to resolve the conflicts and wars that force so many people to leave their homes and their native lands. This means doing everything possible to alleviate the suffering while tirelessly working with wisdom and constancy for justice and peace, bearing witness in practice to human and Christian values.

In the light of its thousand-year history, I invite the Polish nation to look with hope to the future and the issues before it. Such an approach will favour a climate of respect between all elements of society and constructive debate on differing positions. It will also create the best conditions for civil, economic and even demographic growth, fostering the hope of providing a good life for coming generations. The young should not simply have to deal with problems, but rather be able to enjoy the beauty of creation, the benefits we can provide and the hope we can offer.

Social policies in support of the family, the primary and fundamental cell of society, assisting underprivileged and poor families, and helping responsibly to welcome life, will thus prove even more effective. Life must always be welcomed and protected. These two things go together – welcome and protection, from conception to natural death. All of us are called to respect life and care for it. On



the other hand, it is the responsibility of the State, the Church and society to accompany and concretely help all those who find themselves in serious difficulty, so that a child will never be seen as a burden but as a gift, and those who are most vulnerable and poor will not be abandoned.

Mr President, As throughout its long history, Poland can count on the cooperation of the Catholic Church, so that, in the light of the foundational Christian principles that forged Poland's history and identity, the nation may, in changed historical conditions, move forward in fidelity to its finest traditions and with trust and hope, even in times of difficulty. In expressing once again my gratitude, I offer heartfelt good wishes to you and all present, for a serene and fruitful service of the common good. May Our Lady of Czestochowa bless and protect Poland!

27 July 2016 - Window, Franciszkańska Street 3.

Dobry wieczór!

I welcome you warmly. I see that you are full of enthusiasm and great joy, but now I will tell you something that will sadden your hearts. I will tell you a story of one us. Maciej Szymon Cieśla was just over 22. He studied graphic designs and resigned from his job to be a volunteer for the World Youth Day. It was him who prepared all the graphical projects, flags, pilgrims' badges, which embellish the city. In his work he found faith. In November he was diagnosed with cancer.

Doctors could not do anything. Even leg amputation did not help. He wanted to live to the visit of the Pope. He even had a place reserved in the tram in which the Pope is to travel, but he died on 2nd July. Everyone was deeply moved, for he did a lot of good. Now, in silence, let us think about our friend who made so much work to prepare the World Youth Day. And in silence, let us pray, from the bottom of our hearts. He is with us today.

One can think: the Pope spoils our evening. But the truth is that we should become accustomed that we experience good and evil. Such is life, my dear young. But we cannot doubt one thing. The faith of this boy, our friend, who devotedly worked for the World Youth Day, led him to heaven and now he is with Jesus and looks at us. It is a great mercy. Let us applaud our friend.

One day we will also meet him. And we will say: "this is you, nice to meet you".

Today we are here, tomorrow we will be there.

The problem is to choose the right path of life, as he did. We thank God that he gives us such examples of courage. Young and courageous people who help us go further. Don't be afraid, don't be afraid.

God is great, good. There is good in each of us.

Now I say goodbye to you, tomorrow we will meet again. Do your duties, make yourself heard during the night, that is show your Christian joy, the joy of community who follows Jesus.



Now I will bless you, as we are used since childhood, before sleep we say goodbye to our mums.

Let us pray to Virgin Mary. Each of us in their own languages.

Hail Mary...

May Almighty God bless you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Good night. Good night.

Pray for me.

28 July 2016 – Papal Window Address

Good evening!

I have been told that many of you understand Spanish. Therefore, I will speak Spanish. I have also been told that today, here, in this place there is a large group of newly-weds and young couples. When I meet somebody who is to get married – a young boy or a young girl – I say: These people have the courage. Because it is not easy to build a family. It is not easy to make lifelong commitment. You have to be courageous. I congratulate you, since you have this courage. Sometimes I am asked: what to do to make the family go further and overcome all the difficulties. I encourage you to practise three words. Three words which express three attitudes.

I see that the newly-weds are coming. Three words which will help us experience married life, because in married life we encounter difficulties. Marriage is something so beautiful and so wonderful that we must care about it, because it is for ever. These three words: permit, thank you and sorry. Permit. We should always ask our spouse – a wife a husband, or a husband a wife: what do you think about it? Do you think we should do it in that way? Never impose anything. Permit... The second word is to be grateful: how many times should a husband say “thank you” to his wife and how many times should a wife say “thank you” to her husband. Be grateful to each other, because spouses confer the sacrament of marriage on each other, and this sacramental relationship rests on the sacrament of gratitude. Thank you... The third word is sorry. This word is difficult to utter. In marriage, either a husband or a wife, always make mistakes. The ability to admit it, apologise and ask for forgiveness helps a lot.

I can see here young families, newly-weds, many of you are married, others are planning to get married. Remember about these three words, which help us live in marriage. Let us repeat them together: PERMISO, GRACIAS, PERDÓN. PERMIT, THANK YOU and SORRY. Louder please: PERMIT, THANK YOU and SORRY.



Well, this is so beautiful. It is so beautiful to say it, however, there are always problems and arguments in marriages. It is normal and so it happens that spouses argue, raise their voices, collide, and sometimes throw plates. But do not be afraid. I will give you advice: reconcile before the night calls in. And do you know why? Because next day the cold war will become more dangerous. But what to do to reconcile? – one of you could ask. You do not have to say anything – a gesture will suffice. No more, no less. And the peace comes. When there is love, one gesture solves everything.

I am inviting you, before I bless you, I am inviting you to pray... Let us say Hail Mary. Each of us in their own languages.

Hail Mary...

28 July 2016 - CZĘSTOCHOWA Shrine, Holy Mass

Homily

From the readings of this Liturgy a divine thread emerges, one that passes through human history and weaves the history of salvation.

The apostle Paul tells us of God's great plan: "When the fullness of time had come, God sent his son, born of a woman" (Gal 4:4). But history tells us that when this "fullness of time" came, when God became man, humanity was not especially well-disposed, nor was there even a period of stability and peace: there was no "Golden Age". The scenario of this world did not merit the coming of God; indeed, "his own received him not" (Jn 1:11). The fullness of time was thus a gift of grace: God filled our time out of the abundance of his mercy. Out of sheer love he inaugurated the fullness of time.

It is particularly striking how the coming of God into history came about: he was "born of a woman". There was no triumphal entrance or striking epiphany of the Almighty. He did not reveal himself as a brilliantly rising sun, but entered the world in the simplest of ways, as a child from his mother, with that "style" that Scripture tells us is like a rainfall upon the land (cf. Is 55:10), like the smallest of seeds which sprouts and grows (cf. Mk 4:31-32). Thus, contrary to our expectations and perhaps even our desires, the kingdom of God, now as then, "does not come in a way that attracts attention" (Lk 17:20), but rather in littleness, in humility.

Today's Gospel takes up this divine thread delicately passing through history: from the fullness of time we come to the "third day" of Jesus' ministry (cf. Jn 2:1) and the proclamation of the "hour" of salvation (cf. v. 4). Time shortens, God always shows himself in littleness. And so we come to "the first of the signs that Jesus did" (v. 11), in Cana of Galilee.



There is no amazing deed done before the crowd, or even a word to settle a heated political question like that of the subjection of the people to the power of Rome. Instead, in a small village, a simple miracle takes place and brings joy to the wedding of a young and completely anonymous family.

At the same time, the water that became wine at the wedding banquet is a great sign, for it reveals to us the spousal face of God, a God who sits at table with us, who dreams and holds communion with us. It tells us that the Lord does not keep his distance, but is near and real. He is in our midst and he takes care of us, without making decisions in our place and without troubling himself with issues of power.

He prefers to let himself be contained in little things, unlike ourselves, who always want to possess something greater. To be attracted by power, by grandeur, by appearances, is tragically human. It is a great temptation that tries to insinuate itself everywhere. But to give oneself to others, eliminating distances, dwelling in littleness and living the reality of one's everyday life: this is exquisitely divine.

God saves us, then by making himself little, near and real. First God makes himself little. The Lord, who is "meek and humble of heart" (Mt 11:29), especially loves the little ones, to whom the kingdom of God is revealed (Mt 11:25); they are great in his eyes and he looks to them (cf. Is 66:2). He especially loves them because they are opposed to the "pride of life" that belongs to the world (cf. 1 Jn 2:16).

The little ones speak his own language, that of the humble love that brings freedom. So he calls the simple and receptive to be his spokespersons; he entrusts to them the revelation of his name and the secrets of his heart. Our minds turn to so many sons and daughters of your own people, like the martyrs made the defenseless power of the Gospel shine forth, like those ordinary yet remarkable people who bore witness to the Lord's love amid great trials, and those meek and powerful heralds of mercy who were Saint John Paul II and Saint Faustina. Through these "channels" of his love, the Lord has granted priceless gifts to the whole Church and to all mankind. It is significant that this anniversary of the baptism of your people exactly coincides with the Jubilee of mercy.

Then too, God is near, his kingdom is at hand (cf. Mk 1:15). The Lord does not want to be feared like a powerful and aloof sovereign. He does not want to remain on his throne in heaven or in history books, but loves to come down to our everyday affairs, to walk with us. As we think of the gift of a millennium so filled with faith, we do well before all else to thank God for having walked with your people, having taken you by the hand and accompanied you in so many situations. That is what we too, in the Church, are constantly called to do: to listen, to get involved and be neighbours, sharing in people's joys and struggles, so that the Gospel can spread every more consistently and fruitfully: radiating goodness through the transparency of our lives.



Finally, God is real. Today's readings make it clear that everything about God's way of acting is real and concrete. Divine wisdom "is like a master worker" and "plays" (cf. Prov 8:30). The Word becomes flesh, is born of a mother, is born under the law (cf. Gal 4:4), has friends and goes to a party. The eternal is communicated by spending time with people and in concrete situations.

Your own history, shaped by the Gospel, the Cross and fidelity to the Church, has seen the contagious power of a genuine faith, passed down from family to family, from fathers to sons and above all from mothers and grandmothers, whom we need so much to thank. In particular, you have been able to touch with your hand the real and provident tenderness of the Mother of all, whom I have come here as a pilgrim to venerate and whom we have acclaimed in the Psalm as the "great pride of our nation" (Jud 15:9).

It is to Mary, then that we, who have gathered here, now look. In her, we find complete conformity to the Lord. Throughout history, interwoven with the divine thread, is also a "Marian thread". If there is any human glory, any merit of our own in the fullness of time, it is she. Mary is that space, preserved free from sin, where God chose to mirror himself. She is the stairway God took to descend and draw near to us. She is the clearest sign of the fullness of time.

In the life of Mary we admire that littleness that God loves, for he "looked upon the humility of his servant", and "lifted up the lowly" (Lk 1:48, 52). He was so pleased with her that he let his flesh be woven from hers, so that the Virgin became the Mother of God, as an ancient hymn, sung for centuries, proclaims. To you who uninterruptedly come to her, converging upon this, the spiritual capital of the country, may she continue to point the way. May she help you to weave in your own lives the humble and simple thread of the Gospel.

At Cana, as here in Jasna Góra, Mary offers us her nearness and helps us to discover what we need to live life to the full. Now as then, she does this with a mother's love, by her presence and counsel, teaching us to avoid hasty decisions and grumbling in our communities. As the Mother of a family, she wants to keep us together. Through unity, the journey of your people has surmounted any number of harsh experiences.

May the Mother, who stood steadfast at the foot of the Cross and persevered in prayer with the disciples in awaiting the Holy Spirit, obtain for you the desire to leave behind all past wrongs and wounds, and to build fellowship with all, without ever yielding to the temptation to withdraw or to domineer.

At Cana, Our Lady showed great realism. She is a Mother who takes people's problems to heart and acts. She recognizes moments of difficulty and handles them discreetly, efficiently and decisively. She is neither imperious nor intrusive, but a Mother and a handmaid.

Let us ask for the grace to imitate her sensitivity and her creativity in serving those in need, and to know how beautiful it is to spend our lives in the service of others, without favourites or distinctions. May Mary, Cause of our Joy, who



brings peace amid the profusion of sin and the turmoil of history, obtain for us the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and enable us to be good and faithful servants

Through her intercession, may the fullness of time come about also for us. The transition from before to after Christ means little if it remains a date in the annals of history. May each one of us be able to make an interior passage, a Passover of the heart, towards the divine “style” incarnated by Mary. May we do everything in littleness, and accompany others at close hand, with a simple and open heart.

28 July 2016 - Błonia - Welcoming ceremony with young people

Dear Young Friends, good evening!

At last we are together! Thank you for your warm welcome! I thank Cardinal Dziwisz, the bishops, priests, monks, seminarians, the laymen and those who have accompanied you. I am also grateful to all those who made it possible for us to be here today, who “went the extra mile” so that we could celebrate our faith.

In the land of his birth, I especially want to thank Saint John Paul II, who first came up with the idea of these meetings and gave them such momentum. From his place in heaven, he is with us and he sees all of you: so many young people from such a variety of nations, cultures and languages but with one aim, that of rejoicing that Jesus is living in our midst. To say that Jesus is alive means to rekindle our enthusiasm in following him, to renew our passionate desire to be his disciples.

What better opportunity to renew our friendship with Jesus than by building friendships among yourselves! What better way to build our friendship with Jesus than by sharing him with others! What better way to experience the contagious joy of the Gospel than by striving to bring the Good News to all kinds of painful and difficult situations!

Jesus called us to this Thirty-first World Youth Day. Jesus tells us: “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall find mercy (Mt 5:7). Blessed indeed are they who can forgive, who show heartfelt compassion, who are capable of offering the very best of themselves to others.

Dear young people, in these days Poland is in a festive mood; in these days Poland wants to be the ever-youthful face of mercy. From this land, with you and all those young people who cannot be present today yet join us through various mass media, we are going to make this World Youth Day an authentic Jubilee celebration on the occasion of the Jubilee of Mercy.

In my years as a bishop, I have learned one thing, in fact I have learned many things, but I will tell you about only one. Nothing is more beautiful than seeing the enthusiasm, dedication, zeal and energy with which so many young people live their lives. It is beautiful. It is the source of beauty. When Jesus touches a young person’s heart, he or she becomes capable of truly great things. It is



exciting to listen to you share your dreams, your questions and your impatience with those who say that things cannot change. I call them the Quietists. They do not want to change anything. And young people have strength to oppose them. But some of them do not know about it. I ask you. Please answer. Can things be changed?

For me, it is a gift of God to see so many of you, with all your questions, trying to make a difference. It is beautiful and heart-warming to see all that restlessness! Today the Church looks at you, I would like to add: the world looks at you, and wants to learn from you, to be reassured that the Father's Mercy has an ever-youthful face, and constantly invites us to be part of his Kingdom. The kingdom of joy, happiness, the kingdom which pushes things further, which gives us strength to change our lives. I forgot to ask you: Can things be changed?

Knowing your enthusiasm for mission, I repeat: mercy always has a youthful face! Because a merciful heart is motivated to move beyond its comfort zone. A merciful heart can go out and meet others; it is ready to embrace everyone. A merciful heart is able to be a place of refuge for those who are without a home or have lost their home; it is able to build a home and a family for those forced to emigrate; it knows the meaning of tenderness and compassion.

A merciful heart can share its bread with the hungry and welcome refugees and migrants. To say the word "mercy" along with you is to speak of opportunity, future, commitment, trust, openness, hospitality, compassion and dreams. Can you dream? When the heart is open, it can dream. Then there is place for mercy. There is place to hug those suffering, to be beside the people who do not have peace in their hearts, who do not have any means of support, who lack everything that is beautiful. Faith. Let us altogether say: mercy. All of us, once again, to make the world hear us.

Let me tell you another thing I have learned over these years. I do not want to offend anybody. It pains me to meet young people who seem to have opted for "early retirement". This saddens me. Young people who at the age of 23, 24 or 25 but behave like pensioners. I worry when I see young people who have "thrown in the towel" before the game has even begun, who are defeated even before they begin to play, who walk around glumly as if life has no meaning. Deep down, young people like this are bored... and boring! And they bore others. And this saddens me as well. But it is also hard, and troubling, to see young people who waste their lives looking for thrills or a feeling of being alive by taking dark paths and in the end having to pay for it... and pay dearly. You must know many young people who chose such a path.

It is disturbing to see young people squandering some of the best years of their lives, wasting their energies running after peddlers of fond illusions, and there are many of them (where I come from, we call them "vendors of smoke"), who rob you of what is best in you. And this saddens me as well. I am confident that there is nobody like that among you. But there are young "pensioners" who "throw towels" before they begin the game, let themselves be thrilled and enter the void.



Therefore, dear young friends, we have gathered here to help one another other, because we do not want to be robbed of the best of ourselves. We don't want to be robbed of our energy, our joy, our dreams by fond illusions.

Dear friends, so I ask you: Are you looking for empty thrills in life, or do you want to feel power that can give you a lasting sense of life and fulfilment? Empty thrills or the power of grace? Empty thrills or the power of grace. What do you prefer? I cannot hear you well.

To find fulfilment, to gain new strength, there is a way. There is one answer, which cannot be sold and cannot be bought. It is not a thing nor an object, but a person, and he is alive. His name is Jesus Christ. Please applaud. I ask you: can Jesus Christ be bought? Is Jesus Christ sold in shops? He is a gift. The gift from the Father. The gift of our Father. Who is Jesus Christ?

Jesus can give you true passion for life. Jesus can inspire us not to settle for less, but to give the very best of ourselves. Jesus challenges us, spurs us on and helps us keep trying whenever we are tempted to give up. Jesus pushes us to keep our sights high and to dream of great things. But Father – someone could say – it is so difficult to think about the sublime. It is so difficult to climb, to be constantly on the way to the peak. Father, I am weak, I fall, I try, but so many times I do not manage.

When alpinists climb the mountain, they sing a beautiful song, which sounds as follows: in the art of climbing, it is not a case of not falling, but not remaining fallen. If you are weak, if you fall, keep your sight high, there is a hand of Jesus which tells you: raise and follow me. But how many times? Peter asked Jesus: how many times? Seventy-seven. Jesus reaches out his hand every time we fall. Have you understood?

It is Jesus Christ who encourages us to keep our sight high and have sublime dreams. In the Gospel, we heard how Jesus, on his way to Jerusalem, stopped at a home – the home of Martha, Mary and Lazarus – and was welcomed. He stopped, went in and spent time with them. The two women welcomed him because they knew he was open and attentive.

Our many jobs and responsibilities can make us a bit like Martha: busy, scattered, constantly running from place to place... but we can also be like Mary: whenever we see a beautiful landscape, or look at a video from a friend on our cell phone, we can stop and think, stop and listen... In these days, Jesus wants to stop and enter our home. He will look at us hurrying about with all our concerns, as he did with Martha... and he will wait for us to listen to him, like Mary, to make space for him amid the bustle.

May these be days given over to Jesus and to listening to one another. May they help us welcome Jesus in all those with whom we share our homes, our neighbourhoods, our groups and our schools.

Whoever welcomes Jesus, learns to love as Jesus does. So he asks us if we want a full life: Do you want a complete life? Start by letting yourself be open and attentive! Because happiness is sown and blossoms in mercy. That is his answer,



his offer, his challenge, his adventure: mercy. Mercy always has a youthful face. Like that of Mary of Bethany, who sat as a disciple at the feet of Jesus and joyfully listened to his words, since she knew that there she would find peace. Like that of Mary of Nazareth, whose daring “Yes” launched her on the adventure of mercy. All generations would call her blessed; to all of us she is the “Mother of Mercy”. Let us call: Mary, Mother of Mercy, all of us, Mary, Mother of Mercy.

All of us together, then, we ask the Lord: let us repeat in silence, in our hearts. “Launch us on the adventure of mercy! Launch us on the adventure of building bridges and tearing down walls, barriers and barbed wire. Launch us on the adventure of helping the poor, those who feel lonely and abandoned, or no longer find meaning in their lives.

Send us, like Mary of Bethany, to listen attentively to those we do not understand, those of other cultures and peoples, even those we are afraid of because we consider them a threat. Make us attentive to our elderly, our grandparents, as Mary of Nazareth was to Elizabeth, in order to learn from their wisdom. I ask you: do you talk to your grandparents? Do you seek contact with your grandparents? They possess worldly wisdom, and will tell you things that will touch your hearts.

Here we are, Lord! Send us to share your merciful love. We want to welcome you in our midst during this World Youth Day. We want to affirm that our lives are fulfilled when they are shaped by mercy, for that is the best and the sweetest part, and it will never be taken from us. Amen

29 July 2016 - Papal Window Speech

Today we experience a day of suffering. Friday is a day during which we commemorate the death of Jesus. And with the young we finished a day with the Way of the Cross. We prayed during the Way of the Cross. Pain and death of Jesus is for us something special, because we became united in the suffering of Jesus. Not only in the suffering experienced two thousand years ago, but in suffering today. There are so many people in pain, the sick, those who are affected by war, the homeless, the thirsty, those who are doubtful about life, those who do not experience happiness from salvation or those who shoulder the burden of their sins.

In the afternoon I went to the children’s hospital. Also there Jesus suffers, in so many suffering children, sick children. Always in such situations a question can be posed, why, why do they suffer? It is a mystery, and there is no answer to such a question.

In the morning I experienced one more suffering. I was in Auschwitz-Birkenau to commemorate pain felt 70 years ago. So much pain! So much cruelty! Is it possible that we people, created in the image of God, are able to cause such things?



But all this happened. I would not like to embitter you, but I have to tell the truth. Cruelty did not end in Auschwitz – Birkenau. Also today people are tortured. A lot of prisoners are forced to reveal information. This is cruel. A lot of men and women live in overcrowded prisons, forgive me for saying that, live as if they were animals.

Today there is also a lot of cruelty. We say: yes, we saw cruelty 70 years ago, when people were shot dead, hanged, died in gas chambers. But today in many cities in the world, where there is war, we see the same thing. Jesus enters such reality to take it on His shoulders. And He asks us to pray.

Therefore, let us pray for these Jesuses who live in this world today, hungry, thirsty, doubting, sick, those who are lonely, those who take on the burden of doubts, guilt and suffer a lot. Let us pray for so many sick and innocently suffering children, who since childhood carry the cross. Let us pray for all men and women who are tortured today in many countries in the world, for prisoners who are treated like animals. It is very sad, but this is the reality. And it is also real that Jesus carried all of this on his shoulders, also our sins.

All of us here are sinners, all of us feel the burden of our sins. Is there anybody here who does not feel a sinner? Please raise you hand. All of us are sinners, but He loves us. As sinners, we are the sons of God, children of our God. All of us together let us pray for those who suffer evil. And when tears fall, every kid looks for his mum. And we, sinners, are children too. Let us look for mother and let us pray to Mother of God. Each of us in their own languages.

Hail Mary...

God bless you. May Almighty God bless you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. I wish you good night, good rest, pray for me. And tomorrow we will again continue this beautiful World Youth Day.

Thank you very much.

29 July 2016 - Speech in Prokocim, during visit to the Children's University Hospital (UCH)

Dear brothers and sisters,

A special part of my visit to Kraków is this meeting with little patients of this hospital. I greet all of you and I thank the Prime Minister for her kind words. I would like to draw near to all children who are sick, to stand at their bedside, and embrace them. I would like to listen to everyone here, even if for only a moment, and to stay silent in the face of questions that have no easy answers. And to pray.



The Gospel often shows us the Lord Jesus meeting the sick, embracing them and looking for them. Jesus is always attentive to them. He looks at them in the same way that a mother looks at her sick child, and he is moved by compassion for them.

How I wished that we Christians could be as close to the sick as Jesus was, in silence, with a caress, with prayer. Sadly, our society is tainted by the culture of waste, which is the opposite of the culture of acceptance. And the victims of the culture of waste are those who are weakest and most frail; and this is indeed cruel. How beautiful it is instead to see that in this hospital the smallest and most needy are welcomed and cared for. Thank you for this sign of love that you offer us! This is the sign of true civility, human and Christian: to make those who are most disadvantaged the centre of social and political concern.

Sometimes families feel alone in providing this care. What can be done? From this place, so full of concrete signs of love, I would like to say: Let us multiply the works of the culture of acceptance, works inspired by Christian love, love for Jesus crucified, for the flesh of Christ. To serve with love and tenderness, persons who need our help make all of us grow in humanity. It opens the way to eternal life. Those who engage in works of mercy have no fear of death.

I support all those who have made the Gospel call to “visit the sick” a personal life decision: physicians, nurses, healthcare workers, chaplains and volunteers. May the Lord help you to do your work well, here as in every other hospital in the world – I cannot exclude the work of nuns, a great number of nuns, who devote their lives to work in hospitals. May He reward you by giving you inner peace and a heart always capable of tenderness.

Thank you for this encounter! I carry you with me in affection and prayer. And please, do not forget to pray for me.

Let us pray to Mother of God for blessing.

Hail Mary...

May Almighty God bless you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

29 July 2016

Blonia - Way of the Cross

I was hungry and you gave me food,
I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink,
I was a stranger and you welcomed me,
I was naked and you gave me clothing,



I was sick and you took care of me,

I was in prison and you visited me (Mt 25:35-36).

These words of Jesus answer the question that arises so often in our minds and hearts: “Where is God?” Where is God, if evil is present in our world, if there are men and women who are hungry and thirsty, homeless, exiles and refugees? Where is God, when innocent persons die as a result of violence, terrorism and war? Where is God, when cruel diseases break the bonds of life and affection? Or when children are exploited and demeaned, and they too suffer from grave illness? Where is God, amid the anguish of those who doubt and are troubled in spirit?

These are questions that humanly speaking have no answer. We can only look to Jesus and ask him. And Jesus’ answer is this: “God is in them”. Jesus is in them; he suffers in them and deeply identifies with each of them. He is so closely united to them as to form with them, as it were, “one body”.

Jesus himself chose to identify with these our brothers and sisters enduring pain and anguish by agreeing to tread the “way of sorrows” that led to Calvary. By dying on the cross, he surrendered himself into to the hands of the Father, taking upon himself and in himself, with self-sacrificing love, the physical, moral and spiritual wounds of all humanity. By embracing the wood of the cross, Jesus embraced the nakedness, the hunger and thirst, the loneliness, pain and death of men and women of all times. Tonight Jesus, and we with him, embrace with particular love our brothers and sisters from Syria who have fled from the war. We greet them and we welcome them with fraternal affection and friendship.

By following Jesus along the Way of the Cross, we have once again realized the importance of imitating him through the fourteen works of mercy. These help us to be open to God’s mercy, to implore the grace to appreciate that without mercy we can do nothing; without mercy, neither I nor you nor any of us can do a thing.

Let us first consider the seven corporal works of mercy: feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked, sheltering the homeless, visiting the sick and those in prison, and burying the dead. Freely we have received, so freely let us give.

We are called to serve the crucified Jesus in all those who are marginalized, to touch his sacred flesh in those who are disadvantaged, in those who hunger and thirst, in the naked and imprisoned, the sick and unemployed, in those who are persecuted, refugees and migrants. There we find our God; there we touch the Lord. Jesus himself told us this when he explained the criterion on which we will be judged: whenever we do these things to the least of our brothers and sisters, we do them to him (cf. Mt 25:31-46).

After the corporal works of mercy come the spiritual works: counseling the doubtful, instructing the ignorant, admonishing sinners, consoling the afflicted, pardoning offences, bearing wrongs patiently, praying for the living and the dead. In welcoming the outcast who suffers physically and welcoming sinners



who suffer spiritually, our credibility as Christians is at stake – but not at the level of idea.

Humanity today needs men and women, and especially young people like yourselves, who do not wish to live their lives “halfway”, young people ready to spend their lives freely in service to those of their brothers and sisters who are poorest and most vulnerable, in imitation of Christ who gave himself completely for our salvation.

In the face of evil, suffering and sin, the only response possible for a disciple of Jesus is the gift of self, even of one’s own life, in imitation of Christ; it is the attitude of service. Unless those who call themselves Christians live to serve, their lives serve no good purpose. By their lives, they deny Jesus Christ.

This evening, dear friends, the Lord once more asks you to be in the forefront of serving others. He wants to make of you a concrete response to the needs and sufferings of humanity. He wants you to be signs of his merciful love for our time!

To enable you to carry out this mission, he shows you the way of personal commitment and self-sacrifice. It is the Way of the Cross. The Way of the Cross is the way of fidelity in following Jesus to the end, in the often dramatic situations of everyday life. It is a way that fears no lack of success, ostracism or solitude, because it fills our hearts with the fullness of Jesus. The Way of the Cross is the way of God’s own life, his “style”, which Jesus brings even to the pathways of a society at times divided, unjust and corrupt.

The Way of the Cross is not an act of sadomasochism, it alone defeats sin, evil and death, for it leads to the radiant light of Christ’s resurrection and opens the horizons of a new and fuller life. It is the way of hope, the way of the future. Those who take up this way with generosity and faith give hope and future to humanity. The Way of the Cross spreads hope. And I would like you to be sowers of hope.

Dear young people, on that Good Friday many disciples went back crestfallen to their homes. Others chose to go out to the country to forget the cross. I ask you. Answer in the silence of your hearts. How do you want to go back this evening to your own homes, to the places where you are staying? How do you want to go back this evening to be alone with your thoughts? Each of you has to answer the challenge that this question sets before you. The world looks at us.

30 July 2016

St John Paul II Shrine, Holy Mass

Homily

The words of the Gospel we have just heard (cf. Jn 20:19-31) speak to us of a place, a disciple and a book.

The place is where the disciples gathered on the evening of Easter; we read only that its doors were closed (cf. v. 19). Eight days later, the disciples were once more gathered there, and the doors were still shut (cf. v. 26). Jesus enters, stands in their midst and brings them his peace, the Holy Spirit and the forgiveness of sins: in a word, God's mercy. Behind those closed doors there resounds Jesus' call to his followers: "As the Father has sent me, so I send you" (v. 21).

Jesus sends. From the beginning, he wants his to be a Church on the move, a Church that goes out into the world. And he wants it to do this just as he did. He was not sent into the world by the Father to wield power, but to take the form of a slave (cf. Phil 2:7); he came not "to be served, but to serve" (Mk 10:45) and to bring the Good News (cf. Lk 4:18).

In the same way, his followers are sent forth in every age. The contrast is striking: whereas the disciples had closed the doors out of fear, Jesus sends them out on mission. He wants them to open the doors and go out to spread God's pardon and peace, with the power of the Holy Spirit.

This call is also addressed to us. How can we fail to hear its echo in the great appeal of Saint John Paul II: "Open the doors"? Yet, in our lives as priests and consecrated persons, we can often be tempted to remain enclosed, out of fear or convenience, within ourselves and in our surroundings. But Jesus directs us to a one-way street: that of going forth from ourselves. It is a one-way trip, with no return ticket. It involves making an exodus from ourselves, losing our lives for his sake (cf. Mk 8:35) and setting out on the path of self-gift. Nor does Jesus like journeys made halfway, doors half-closed, lives lived on two tracks. He asks us to pack lightly for the journey, to set out renouncing our own security, with him alone as our strength.

In other words, the life of Jesus' closest disciples, which is what we are called to be, is shaped by concrete love, a love, in other words, marked by service and availability. It is a life that has no closed spaces or private property for our own use, at least there should not be. Those who choose to model their entire life on Jesus no longer choose their own places; they go where they are sent, in ready response to the one who calls.

They do not even choose their own times. The house where they live does not belong to them, because the Church and the world are the open spaces of their mission. Their wealth is to put the Lord in the midst of their lives and to seek nothing else for themselves. So they flee the satisfaction of being at the centre of things; they do not build on the shaky foundations of worldly power, or settle into the comforts that compromise evangelization. They do not waste time planning a secure future, lest they risk becoming isolated and gloomy, enclosed within the narrow walls of joyless and desperate self-centredness.

Finding their happiness in the Lord, they are not content with a life of mediocrity, but burn with the desire to bear witness and reach out to others. They love to take risks and to set out, not limited to trails already blazed, but open and faithful to the paths pointed out by the Spirit. Rather than just getting by, they rejoice to evangelize.



Secondly, today's Gospel presents us with the one disciple who is named: Thomas. In his hesitation and his efforts to understand, this disciple, albeit somewhat stubborn, is a bit like us and we find him likeable. Without knowing it, he gives us a great gift: he brings us closer to God, because God does not hide from those who seek him. Jesus shows Thomas his glorious wounds; he makes him touch with his hand the infinite tenderness of God, the vivid signs of how much he suffered out of love for humanity.

For us who are disciples, it is important to put our humanity in contact with the flesh of the Lord, to bring to him, with complete trust and utter sincerity, our whole being. As Jesus told Saint Faustina, he is happy when we tell him everything: he is not bored with our lives, which he already knows; he waits for us to tell him even about the events of our day (cf. Diary, 6 September 1937).

That is the way to seek God: through prayer that is transparent and unafraid to hand over to him our troubles, our struggles and our resistance. Jesus' heart is won over by sincere openness, by hearts capable of acknowledging and grieving over their weakness, yet trusting that precisely there God's mercy will be active.

What does Jesus ask of us? He desires hearts that are truly consecrated, hearts that draw life from his forgiveness in order to pour it out with compassion on our brothers and sisters. Jesus wants hearts that are open and tender towards the weak, never hearts that are hardened. He wants docile and transparent hearts that do not dissimulate before those whom the Church appoints as our guides.

Disciples do not hesitate to ask questions, they have the courage to face their misgivings and bring them to the Lord, to their formators and superiors, without calculations or reticence. A faithful disciple engages in constant watchful discernment, knowing that the heart must be trained daily, beginning with the affections, to flee every form of duplicity in attitudes and in life.

The Apostle Thomas, at the conclusion of his impassioned quest, not only came to believe in the resurrection, but found in Jesus his life's greatest treasure, his Lord. He says to Jesus: "My Lord and my God!" (v. 28). We would do well each day to pray these magnificent words, and to say to the Lord: You are my one treasure, the path I must follow, the core of my life, my all.

The final verse of today's Gospel speaks of a book: it is the Gospel that, we are told, does not contain all the many other signs that Jesus worked (v. 30). After the great sign of his mercy, we could say that there is no longer a need to add another. Yet one challenge does remain. There is room left for the signs needing to be worked by us, who have received the Spirit of love and are called to spread mercy.

It might be said that the Gospel, the living book of God's mercy that must be continually read and reread, still has many blank pages left. It remains an open book that we are called to write in the same style, by the works of mercy we practise. Let me ask you this, dear brothers and sisters: What are the pages of your books like? Are they blank? May the Mother of God help us in this. May she,



who fully welcomed the word of God into her life (cf. Lk 8:20-21), give us the grace to be living writers of the Gospel. May our Mother of Mercy teach us how to take concrete care of the wounds of Jesus in our brothers and sisters in need, those close at hand and those far away, the sick and the migrant, because by serving those who suffer we honour the flesh of Christ.

May the Virgin Mary help us to spend ourselves completely for the good of the faithful entrusted to us, and to show concern for one another as true brothers and sisters in the communion of the Church, our holy Mother.

Dear brothers and sisters, each of us holds in his or her heart a very personal page of the book of God's mercy. It is the story of our own calling, the voice of the love that attracted us and transformed our life, leading us to leave everything at his word and to follow him (cf. Lk 5:11).

Today let us gratefully rekindle the memory of his call, which is stronger than any resistance and weariness on our part. As we continue this celebration of the Eucharist, the centre of our lives, let us thank the Lord for having entered through our closed doors with his mercy, for calling us, like Thomas, by name, and for giving us the grace to continue writing his Gospel of love.

30 July 2016

Campus Misericordiae - Prayer Vigil - Speech

Dear young people,

It is good to be here with you at this Prayer Vigil!

At the end of his powerful and moving witness, Rand asked something of us. She said: "I earnestly ask you to pray for my beloved country". Her story, involving war, grief and loss, ended with a request for prayers. Is there a better way for us to begin our vigil than by praying?

We have come here from different parts of the world, from different continents, countries, languages, cultures and peoples. Some of us are sons and daughters of nations that may be at odds and engaged in various conflicts or even open war. Others of us come from countries that may be at "peace", free of war and conflict, where most of the terrible things occurring in our world are simply a story on the evening news. But think about it.

For us, here, today, coming from different parts of the world, the suffering and the wars that many young people experience are no longer anonymous, something we read about in the papers. They have a name, they have a face, they have a story, they are close at hand. Today the war in Syria has caused pain and suffering for so many people, for so many young people like our good friend Rand, who has come here and asked us to pray for her beloved country.



Some situations seem distant until in some way we touch them. We don't appreciate certain things because we only see them on the screen of a cell phone or a computer. But when we come into contact with life, with people's lives, not just images on a screen, something powerful happens. We feel the need to get involved. To see that there are no more "forgotten cities", to use Rand's words, or brothers and sisters of ours "surrounded by death and killing", completely helpless.

Dear friends, I ask that we join in prayer for the sufferings of all the victims of war in the world today. Once and for all, may we realize that nothing justifies shedding the blood of a brother or sister; that nothing is more precious than the person next to us. In asking you to pray for this, I would also like to thank Natalia and Miguel for sharing their own battles and inner conflicts. You told us about your struggles, and about how you succeeded in overcoming them. Both of you are a living sign of what God's mercy wants to accomplish in us.

This is no time for denouncing anyone or fighting. We do not want to tear down. We do not want to offend. We have no desire to conquer hatred with more hatred, violence with more violence, terror with more terror. We are here today because the Lord has called us together. Our response to a world at war has a name: its name is fraternity, its name is brotherhood, its name is communion, its name is family.

We celebrate the fact that coming from different cultures, we have come together to pray. Let our best word, our best argument, be our unity in prayer. Let us take a moment of silence and pray. Let us place before the Lord these testimonies of our friends, and let us identify with those for whom "the family is a meaningless concept, the home only a place to sleep and eat", and with those who live with the fear that their mistakes and sins have made them outcasts. Let us also place before the Lord your own "battles", the interior struggles that each of you carries in his or her heart. Therefore, to build one family in fraternity, let us raise and join hands and pray in silence.

(SILENCE)

As we were praying, I thought of the Apostles on the day of Pentecost. Picturing them can help us come to appreciate all that God dreams of accomplishing in our lives, in us and with us. That day, the disciples were together behind locked doors, out of fear. They felt threatened, surrounded by an atmosphere of persecution that had cornered them in a little room and left them silent and paralyzed. Fear had taken hold of them. Then, in that situation, something spectacular, something grandiose, occurred. The Holy Spirit and tongues as of fire came to rest upon each of them, propelling them towards an undreamt-of adventure. And then everything changed.

We have heard three testimonies. Our hearts were touched by their stories, their lives. We have seen how, like the disciples, they experienced similar moments,



living through times of great fear, when it seemed like everything was falling apart. The fear and anguish born of knowing that leaving home might mean never again seeing their loved ones, the fear of not feeling appreciated or loved, the fear of having no choices. They shared with us the same experience the disciples had; they felt the kind of fear that only leads to one thing: Where can fear lead us? To the feeling of being closed in on oneself, trapped.

Once we feel that way, our fear starts to fester and is inevitably joined by its “twin sister”, paralysis: the feeling of being paralyzed. Thinking that in this world, in our cities and our communities, there is no longer any room to grow, to dream, to create, to gaze at new horizons – to live in the world – is one of the worst things that can happen to us in life, and especially at the young age. When we are paralyzed, we miss the magic of encountering others, making friends, sharing dreams, walking at the side of others. This does not let us join hands. It closes us as if in a glass cage.

But in life there is another, even more dangerous, kind of paralysis. It is not easy for the young to put our finger on it. I like to describe it as the paralysis that comes from confusing happiness with a sofa. In other words, to think that in order to be happy all we need is a good sofa. A sofa that makes us feel comfortable, calm, safe. A sofa like one of those we have nowadays with a built-in massage unit to put us to sleep.

A sofa that promises us hours of comfort so we can escape to the world of video games and spend all kinds of time in front of a computer screen. A sofa that keeps us safe from any kind of pain and fear.

A sofa that allows us to stay home without needing to work at or worry about anything. “Sofahappiness”! That is probably the most harmful and insidious form of paralysis, since little by little, without even realizing it, we start to nod off, to grow drowsy and dull, yesterday I talked about the young people who retire at the age of 20, while others – perhaps more alert than we are, but not necessarily better – decide on our future for us. For many people in fact, it is much easier and better to have drowsy and dull kids who confuse happiness with a sofa.

For many people, that is more convenient than having young people who are alert and searching, trying to respond to God’s dream and to all the restlessness present in the human heart. I ask you: do you want to nod off, grow drowsy and dull? Do you want others to decide on your future? Do you want to be free, awaken? Fight for your future? (...) You aren’t too convinced, right?

The truth, though, is something else. Dear young people, we didn’t come into this work to “vegetate”, to take it easy, to make our lives a comfortable sofa to fall asleep on. No, we came for another reason: to leave a mark. It is very sad to pass through life without leaving a mark. But when we opt for ease and convenience, for confusing happiness with consumption, then we end up paying a high price indeed: we lose our freedom. This is the price. There are many people who do



not want the young to be free. On the contrary, they want them to grow drowsy and dull.

This is itself a great form of paralysis, whenever we start thinking that happiness is the same as comfort and convenience, that being happy means going through life asleep or on tranquillizers, that the only way to be happy is to live in a haze. Certainly, drugs are bad, but there are plenty of other socially acceptable drugs, that can end up enslaving us just the same. One way or the other, they rob us of our greatest treasure: our freedom.

My friends, Jesus is the Lord of risk, of the eternal “more”. Jesus is not the Lord of comfort, security and ease. Following Jesus demands a good dose of courage, a readiness to trade in the sofa for a pair of walking shoes and to set out on new and uncharted paths. To blaze trails that open up new horizons capable of spreading joy, the joy that is born of God’s love and wells up in your hearts with every act of mercy.

To take the path of the “craziness” of our God, who teaches us to encounter him in the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, the sick, the friend in trouble, the prisoner, the refugee and the migrant, and our neighbours who feel abandoned. To take the path of our God, who encourages us to be politicians, thinkers, social activists. The God who asks us to devise an economy inspired by solidarity. In all the settings in which you find yourselves, God’s love invites you to bring the Good News, making of your own lives a gift to him and to others. To be courageous and free.

You might say to me: Father, that is not for everybody, but just for a chosen few. True, and those chosen are all who are ready to share their lives with others. Just as the Holy Spirit transformed the hearts of the disciples on the day of Pentecost, so he did with our friends who shared their testimonies. I will use your own words, Miguel. You told us that in the “Facenda” on the day they entrusted you with the responsibility for helping make the house run better, you began to understand that God was asking something of you. That is when things began to change.

That is the secret, dear friends, and all of us are called to share in it. God expects something from you. God wants something from you. God hopes in you. God comes to break down all our fences. He comes to open the doors of our lives, our dreams, our ways of seeing things. God comes to break open everything that keeps you closed in. He encourages you to dream. He wants to make you see that, with you, the world can be different. For the fact is, unless you offer the best of yourselves, the world will never be different. This is a challenge!

The times we live in do not call for young “couch potatoes” but for young people with shoes, or better, boots laced. It only takes players on the first string, and it has no room for bench-warmers. Today’s world demands that you be a protagonist of history because life is always beautiful when we choose to live it



fully, when we choose to leave a mark. History today calls us to defend our dignity and not to let others decide on our future. We have to decide on our future. You have to decide on your future. As he did on Pentecost, the Lord wants to work one of the greatest miracles we can experience; he wants to turn your hands, my hands, our hands, into signs of reconciliation, of communion, of creation. He wants your hands to continue building the world of today. And he wants to build that world with you. What can say? Yes or no?

You might say to me: Father, but I have my limits, I am a sinner, what can I do? When the Lord calls us, he doesn't worry about what we are, what we have been, or what we have done or not done. Quite the opposite. When he calls us, he is thinking about everything we have to give, all the love we are capable of spreading. His bets are on the future, on tomorrow. Jesus is pointing you to the future. Not to the museum. So today, my friends, Jesus is inviting you, calling you, to leave your mark on life, to leave a mark on history, your own and that of many others as well.

Life nowadays tells us that it is much easier to concentrate on what divides us, what keeps us apart. People try to make us believe that being closed in on ourselves is the best way to keep safe from harm. Today, we adults need you to teach us – as you are doing now – how to live in diversity, in dialogue, to experience multiculturalism not as a threat but an opportunity. And you are the future.

Have the courage to teach us that it is easier to build bridges than walls! We need such teaching. Together we ask that you challenge us to take the path of fraternity. You will be our accusers – if we choose the path of building bridges, hostility, war. Building bridges... Do you know the first bridge that has to be built? It is a bridge that we can build here and now – by reaching out and taking each other's hand.

Come on, build it now, here, this first of bridges: take each other's hands. This is a primary bridge. This is the first, the model one. There is always a risk that our hand will remain empty, but you have to risk in life. Those who don't risk, never win. Along such a bridge we can walk, the bridge which we build by joining hands. This is a great bridge of brotherhood. May the powers of this world learn to build it... not for pictures, when joining hands they think of something different, but for building ever bigger bridges.

May this human bridge be the beginning of many, many others; in that way, it will leave a mark. Today Jesus, who is the way, the truth and the life, is calling you to leave your mark on history. He, who is life, is asking each of you to leave a mark that brings life to your own history and that of many others.

He, who is truth, is asking you to abandon the paths of rejection, division and emptiness. Are you up to this? What answer will you give? I am curious. Will



your hands and your feet answer the Lord, who is the way, the truth and the life?
Are you up to this?

May the Lord bless your dreams!

Thank you!

31 July 2016

Campus Misericordiae – Final Mass

Homily

Dear young people, you have come to Krakow to meet Jesus. Today's Gospel speaks to us of just such a meeting between Jesus and a man named Zacchaeus, in Jericho (cf. Lk 19:1-10). There Jesus does not simply preach or greet people; as the Evangelist tells us, he passed through the city (v. 1). In other words, Jesus wants to draw near to us personally, to accompany our journey to its end, so that his life and our life can truly meet.

An amazing encounter then takes place, with Zacchaeus, the chief “publican” or tax collector. Zacchaeus was thus a wealthy collaborator of the hated Roman occupiers, someone who exploited his own people, someone who, because of his ill repute, could not even approach the Master. His encounter with Jesus changed his life, just as it has changed, and can daily still change, each of our lives. But Zacchaeus had to face a number of obstacles in order to meet Jesus, but it was not easy. At least three of these can also say something to us.

The first obstacle is smallness of stature. Zacchaeus couldn't see the Master because he was little. Even today we can risk not getting close to Jesus because we don't feel big enough, because we don't think ourselves worthy. This is a great temptation; it has to do not only with self-esteem, but with faith itself. For faith tells us that we are “children of God... that is what we are” (1 Jn 3:1). We have been created in God's own image; Jesus has taken upon himself our humanity and his heart will never be separated from us; the Holy Spirit wants to dwell within us. We have been called to be happy for ever with God!

That is our real “stature”, our spiritual identity: we are God's beloved children, always. So you can see that not to accept ourselves, to live glumly, to be negative, means not to recognize our deepest identity. It is like walking away when God wants to look at me, trying to spoil his dream for me. God loves us the way we are, and no sin, fault or mistake of ours makes him change his mind.

As far as Jesus is concerned – as the Gospel shows – no one is unworthy of, or far from, his thoughts. No one is insignificant. He loves all of us with a special love; for him all of us are important: you are important! God counts on you for what you are, not for what you possess. In his eyes the clothes you wear or the kind of cell phone you use are of absolutely no concern. He doesn't care whether you are



stylish or not; he cares about you! As you are. In his eyes, you are precious, and your value is inestimable.

At times in our lives, we aim lower rather than higher. At those times, it is good to realize that God remains faithful, even obstinate, in his love for us. The fact is, he loves us even more than we love ourselves. He believes in us even more than we believe in ourselves. He is always “cheering us on”; he is our biggest fan. He is there for us, waiting with patience and hope, even when we turn in on ourselves and brood over our troubles and past injuries. But such brooding is unworthy of our spiritual stature!

It is a kind of virus infecting and blocking everything; it closes doors and prevents us from rising and starting over. God, on the other hand, is hopelessly hopeful! He believes that we can always rise, and he hates to see us glum and gloomy. It is sad when we see a young person who does not feel joy. Because we are always his beloved sons and daughters.

Let us be mindful of this at the dawn of each new day. It will do us good to pray every morning: “Lord, I thank you for loving me; help me to be in love with my own life!” Not with my faults, that need to be corrected, but with life itself, which is a great gift, for it is a time to love and to be loved.

Zacchaeus faced a second obstacle in meeting Jesus: the paralysis of shame. We talked about it yesterday evening. We can imagine what was going on in his heart before he climbed that sycamore. It must have been quite a struggle – on one hand, a healthy curiosity and desire to know Jesus; on the other, the risk of appearing completely ridiculous.

Zacchaeus was public figure, a man of power. He knew that, in trying to climb that tree, he would have become a laughing stock to all. Yet he mastered his shame, because the attraction of Jesus was more powerful. You know what happens when someone is so attractive that we fall in love with them: we end up ready to do things we would never have even thought of doing. Something similar took place in the heart of Zacchaeus, when he realized that Jesus was so important that he would do anything for him, since Jesus alone could pull him out of the mire of sin and discontent. The paralysis of shame did not have the upper hand.

The Gospel tells us that Zacchaeus “ran ahead”, “climbed” the tree, and then, when Jesus called him, he “hurried down” (vv. 4, 6). He took a risk, he put his life on the line. For us too, this is the secret of joy: not to stifle a healthy curiosity, but to take a risk, because life is not meant to be tucked away. When it comes to Jesus, we cannot sit around waiting with arms folded; he offers us life – we can’t respond by thinking about it or “texting” a few words!

Dear young friends, don’t be ashamed to bring everything to the Lord in confession, especially your weaknesses, your struggles and your sins. He will surprise you with his forgiveness and his peace. Don’t be afraid to say “yes” to him with all your heart, to respond generously and to follow him! Don’t let your soul grow numb, but aim for the goal of a beautiful love which also demands



sacrifice. Say a firm “no” to the narcotic of success at any cost and the sedative of worrying only about yourself and your own comfort.

After his small stature and the paralysis of shame, there was a third obstacle that Zacchaeus had to face. It was no longer an interior one, but was all around him. It was the grumbling of the crowd, who first blocked him and then criticized him: How could Jesus have entered his house, the house of a sinner! How truly hard it is to welcome Jesus, how hard it is to accept a “God who is rich in mercy” (Eph 2:4)!

People will try to block you, to make you think that God is distant, rigid and insensitive, good to the good and bad to the bad. Instead, our heavenly Father “makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good” (Mt 5:45). He demands of us real courage: the courage to be more powerful than evil by loving everyone, even our enemies. People may laugh at you because you believe in the gentle and unassuming power of mercy. But do not be afraid.

Think of the motto of these days: “Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy” (Mt 5:7). People may judge you to be dreamers, because you believe in new humanity, one that rejects hatred between peoples, one that refuses to see borders as barriers and can cherish its own traditions without being self-centred or small-minded. Don’t be discouraged: with a smile and open arms, you proclaim hope and you are a blessing for our one human family, which here you represent so beautifully!

That day the crowd judged Zacchaeus; they looked him over, up and down. But Jesus did otherwise: he gazed up at him (v. 5). Jesus looks beyond the faults and sees the person. He does not halt before bygone evil, but sees future good. His gaze remains constant, even when it is not met; it seeks the way of unity and communion. In no case does it halt at appearances, but looks to the heart.

With this gaze of Jesus, you can help bring about another humanity, without looking for acknowledgement but seeking goodness for its own sake, content to maintain a pure heart and to fight peaceably for honesty and justice.

Don’t stop at the surface of things; distrust the worldly cult of appearances, cosmetic attempts to improve our looks. Instead, “download” the best “link” of all, that of a heart which sees and transmits goodness without growing weary. The joy that you have freely received from God, freely give away (cf. Mt 10:8): so many people are waiting for it! They are waiting for it from you.

Finally let us listen to the words that Jesus spoke to Zacchaeus, which seem to be meant for us today: “Come down, for I must stay at your house today” (v. 5). Open the door of your heart. Jesus extends the same invitation to you: “I must stay at your house today”.

We can say that World Youth Day begins today and continues tomorrow, in your homes, since that is where Jesus wants to meet you from now on. The Lord doesn’t want to remain in this beautiful city, or in cherished memories alone. He wants to enter your homes, to dwell in your daily lives: in your studies, your first years of work, your friendships and affections, your hopes and dreams. How



greatly he desires that you bring all this to him in prayer! How much he hopes that, in all the “contacts” and “chats” of each day, pride of place be given to the golden thread of prayer!

How much he wants his word to be able to speak to you day after day, so that you can make his Gospel your own, so that it can serve as a compass for you on the highways of life!

In asking to come to your house, Jesus calls you, as he did Zacchaeus, by name. Jesus calls each of us by name. Your name is precious to him. The name “Zacchaeus” would have made people back the think of the remembrance of God. Trust the memory of God: his memory is not a “hard disk” that “saves” and “archives” all our data, but a heart filled with tender compassion, one that finds joy in “erasing” in us every trace of evil.

May we too now try to imitate the faithful memory of God and treasure the good things we have received in these days. In silence, let us remember this encounter, let us preserve the memory of the presence of God and his word, and let us listen once more to the voice of Jesus as he calls us by name. So let us now pray silently, remembering and thanking the Lord wanted us to be here and has come here to meet us.

31 July 2016

Campus Misericordiae – Angelus and Speech (Announcing WYD 2019)

Dear brothers and sisters,

At the conclusion of this celebration, I join all of you in thanking God, the Father of infinite mercy, for allowing us to experience this World Youth Day. I thank Cardinal Dziwisz and Cardinal Ryłko for their kind words and especially for the work and prayer with which they have prepared for this event. I also thank all those who have contributed to its successful outcome.

Also, a big word of thanks goes to you, dear young people! You filled Krakow with the contagious enthusiasm of your faith. Saint John Paul II has rejoiced from heaven, and he will help you spread the joy of the Gospel everywhere.

In these days, we have experienced the beauty of our universal fraternity in Christ, the centre and hope of our lives. We have heard his voice, the voice of the Good Shepherd who dwells in our midst. He has spoken to each of you in your heart. He has renewed you by his love and he has shown you the light of his forgiveness, the power of his grace. He has made you experience the reality of prayer. These days have given you a spiritual “breath of fresh air” that will help you live lives of mercy once you return to your own countries and communities.

Here, beside the altar, is the image of the Virgin Mary venerated by Saint John Paul II in the shrine of Kalwaria. Mary, our Mother, teaches us how we can make



our experience here in Poland be productive. She tells us to do what she did: not to squander the gift you have received, but to treasure it in your heart so it can grow and bear fruit, with the help of the Holy Spirit.

In this way, each of you, for all your limitations and failings, can be a witness to Christ wherever you live: at home, in your parishes, in your associations and groups, and your places of study, work, service, entertainment... wherever God's providence will lead you.

God's providence is always one step ahead of us. Think: it has already determined the next stop in this great pilgrimage begun in 1985 by Saint John Paul II! So now I am happy to announce that the next World Youth Day – after the two that will be held on the diocesan level – will take place in 2019 in Panama. I am inviting all the bishops of Panama to come and give blessing with me.

Trusting in the intercession of Mary, let us ask the Holy Spirit to enlighten and sustain the journey of young people in the Church and in the world, and make you disciples and witnesses to God's mercy. And now let us recite together the Angelus prayer...

31 July 2016

Papal Window - Blessing

World Youth Day, Sunday 31 July 2016

Thank you for accompanying me, for coming here to say goodbye.

Thank you. Thank you very much for warm welcome during these days.

And now, before I leave, I would like to give you my blessing. But I would also like to ask you not to forget to pray for me.

Let us pray to Mother of God, each of us in their own languages.

Dios Te salve María...

Benedica...

See you again!

*Franciscus*₁