



The Holy See

VIDEO MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO CUBAN YOUTH GATHERED IN HAVANA

[28-31 JULY 2016]

Dear young people in Havana,

With great hope I join you at this time in which you enter in harmony with the universal Church whose youthful heart will be in Krakow. I trust that these days will be for everyone a special occasion to promote the culture of encounter, the culture of respect, the culture of understanding and of mutual forgiveness. This is to “create a din”, this is to dream. And young people must “create a din”.

I recommend that you live the experience of carefully listening to the Gospel and then taking it and making it authentic in your own life, and in that of your family and of your friends. You know that the Gospel transforms the heart: let yourselves be transformed by its words which “are spirit and life”. His words are concrete, as concrete as life, because at your age you have already realized that life is concrete, it is no dream, life is concrete, either you take it as it actually is, or you fail. When you recite the *Via Crucis* remember that we cannot love God if we do not love our brothers and sisters, and this is simply because the Cross is the assurance of God’s steadfast love for us. This means that the Cross is a concrete love for a concrete life, a love so great that it is actually capable of entering our sin, our misery, of forgiving sin, of healing misery. The Cross is a love that enters our suffering and gives us the strength to bear it; and it also enters death in order to overcome it and save us.

When you pass through the Holy Door, succumb to this love — if a doctor hears me he will scold me — be infected, be infected by love, this way you will learn to always look at others with mercy, with closeness, with kindness, especially those who suffer and who are in need of help.

You will be before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament: accompany him, because in him, and in him

alone, you will find the strength to continue the most beautiful and constructive project of love in our life; because — you know, right? — love is constructive, love does not even destroy enemies, love is always constructive. And, when you are sent by the bishops as Witnesses of Mercy, remember that the Master's most beautiful wish is that you fear nothing. Boys and girls, fear nothing, be free from the fetters of this world and proclaim to all, to the sick, to the elderly, to sad people, that the Church is weeping alongside them, and that Jesus is capable of giving them new life, of bringing them back to life.

Perhaps what the venerable Fr Félix Varela left us will help you: you are the “sweet hope for our homeland”. Father [Félix] was brave! But he is telling you this, he isn't saying it to me, you are the “sweet hope for our homeland”. In order to be bearers of hope, it is important that you not lose the ability to dream. Remember that in the reality of life there must be this ability to dream and that those who are not able to dream are closed within themselves (cf. *Address to Students at the Fr Félix Varela Cultural Center*, Havana, 20 September 2015). Allow me to add: those who are not able to dream have already gone into retirement. Young people who do not have this ability to dream and to go forth have already gone into retirement and are not even as useful as confetti at Carnival.

Young Cubans: Be open to great things! Do not be afraid, do not be hard to please. Dream that with you the world can be different! Dream that with you Cuba can be different and each day better! Do not give up! In this task, it is important, it is imperative to open your hearts and minds to the hope that Jesus gives.

Never forget that this hope is painful; hope involves suffering in order to complete a project, but likewise do not forget that it gives life, it is fruitful. And with this hope you will not be barren, but rather you will give life to others, you will build the homeland, you will build the Church, you will do great things. Why? Because hope invites us to build “social friendship”, even if we think about it differently. It is not necessary for everyone to think in the same way; no, no. You must unite in “social friendship”, even if someone thinks about it in a different way or has another conviction. You all have something in common: the desire to dream and love for your homeland. The important thing, while equal and different, is to build “social friendship” with everyone; build bridges, work together. Build bridges? Some of you might say: how can I build a bridge if I am neither a builder nor an engineer? All of us can build bridges, with words, with wishes, with the heart. Now however, I call you to be builders of a human bridge, of the first bridge to be built in history: join hands, reach out and join hands. Do it! Like this, now, all of us together, holding hands, are witnessing that we want to build bridges and work together.

Boys and girls, gathered in Havana, but with your heart in Krakow: do not isolate yourselves, walk together! Build bridges, always hold hands.

May the Virgin Mary of Charity encourage you on this journey. For over 400 years she has

accompanied the faith, hope and encounter among all Cubans. Lay at her feet all the beautiful things that her Son will give you in these days. And remember her words at Cana: "Do whatever he tells you" (Jn 2:5).

I assure you of my closeness and of my prayers for you and for all the beloved people of Cuba, and at the same time I bless you with particular affection. As always I ask you: pray for me. An embrace and a bridge.