



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO RIO DE JANEIRO
ON THE OCCASION OF THE XXVIII WORLD YOUTH DAY

WELCOMING CEREMONY FOR THE YOUNG PEOPLE

GREETING OF POPE FRANCIS

Waterfront of Copacabana, Rio de Janeiro
Thursday, 25 July 2013

Dear Young Friends,

Good evening! First of all, I want to thank you for the testimony you are giving to the world. I always heard it said that the people of Rio didn't like the cold and rain, but you are showing that your faith is stronger than the cold and rain. Congratulations! You are true heroes!

In you I see the beauty of Christ's young face and I am filled with joy. I recall the first World Youth Day on an international level. It was celebrated in 1987 in Argentina, in my home city of Buenos Aires. I still cherish the words of Blessed John Paul II to the young people on that occasion: "I have great hope in you! I hope above all that you will renew your fidelity to Jesus Christ and to his redeeming Cross" (*Address to Young People*, Buenos Aires, 11 April 1987).

Before I continue, I would like to call to mind the tragic accident in French Guiana, that the young people suffered on their way to this World Youth Day. There young Sophie Morinière was killed and other young people were wounded. I invite all of you to observe a moment of silence and of prayer to God, Our Father, for Sophie, for the wounded, and for their families.

This year, World Youth Day comes to Latin America for the second time. And you, young people, have responded in great number to the invitation extended by Pope Benedict XVI to celebrate this occasion. We thank him with all our hearts! We send our greeting and our enthusiastic applause to

him who brought us together here today. You know that, before coming to Brazil, I spoke with him, and I asked him to accompany me in prayer on this trip. And he said to me: I will accompany all of you in prayer and I will follow you on television. So, at this moment, he is watching us. We express to him our heartfelt thanks. I am looking at the large crowd before me – there are so many of you! And you have come from every continent! In many cases you have come from afar, not only geographically, but also existentially, culturally, socially and humanly. But today you are all here, or better yet, we are all here together as one, in order to share the faith and the joy of an encounter with Christ, of being his disciples. This week Rio has become the centre of the Church, its heart both youthful and vibrant, because you have responded generously and courageously to the invitation that Christ has made to you to be with him and to become his friends.

The train of this World Youth Day has come from afar and has travelled across all of Brazil following the stages of the project entitled “*Bota fé* – put on faith!” Today the train has arrived at Rio de Janeiro. From Corcovado, Christ the Redeemer embraces us and blesses us. Looking out to this sea, the beach and all of you gathered here, I am reminded of the moment when Jesus called the first disciples to follow him by the shores of Lake Tiberias. Today Christ asks each of us again: Do you want to be my disciple? Do you want to be my friend? Do you want to be a witness to my Gospel? In the spirit of *The Year of Faith*, these questions invite us to renew our commitment as Christians. Your families and local communities have passed on to you the great gift of faith, Christ has grown in you. Today he desires to come here to confirm you in this faith, faith in the living Christ who dwells within you, but I have come as well to be confirmed by the enthusiasm of your faith! You know that in the life of a Bishop there are many problems that need to be resolved. And with these problems and difficulties, a Bishop’s faith can grow sad. How horrible is a sad Bishop! How bad is that! So that my faith might not be sad, I came here to be filled with your contagious enthusiasm!

I greet you with affection. All of you assembled here from the five continents and, through you, all young people of the world, in particular those who wanted to come to Rio de Janeiro but weren’t able to come. To those who are following us by means of radio, television and internet, to everyone I say: Welcome to this feast of faith! In several parts of the world, at this very moment, many young people have come together to share this event with us: let us all experience the joy of being united with each other in friendship and faith. And be sure of this: my heart embraces all of you with universal affection. Because what is most important today is your gathering here and the gathering together of all the young people who are following us through various forms of media. From the summit of the mountain of Corcovado, Christ the Redeemer welcomes you and embraces you in this beautiful city of Rio!

A particular greeting to the President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, the untiring Cardinal Stanisław Ryłko, and to all who work with him. I thank Archbishop Orani João Tempesta, of São Sebastião do Rio de Janeiro, for the warm welcome given to me – I wish to say here that the people of Rio know well how to welcome, they know how to offer a great welcome – and I thank

the Archbishop for the considerable work of realizing this World Youth Day, together with his Auxiliary Bishops and with the many Dioceses of this vast country of Brazil. I would also like to express my gratitude to all the national, state and local authorities and to those who have worked to make possible this unique moment of celebration of unity, faith and fraternity. Thank you to my brother Bishops, to the priests, seminarians, consecrated persons and the lay faithful that have accompanied the young from various parts of the world on their pilgrimage to Jesus. To each and every one of you I offer an affectionate embrace in Jesus and with Jesus.

Brothers and sisters, dear friends, welcome to the XXVIII World Youth Day in this marvellous city of Rio de Janeiro!

HOMILY OF THE HOLY FATHER

Dear Friends,

“It is good for us to be here!”, Peter cries out after seeing the Lord Jesus transfigured in glory. Are we able to repeat these words with him? I think the answer is yes, because here today, it is good for all of us to be together around Jesus! It is he who welcomes us and who is present in our midst here in Rio. In the Gospel we have heard God the Father say: “This is my Son, my chosen one; listen to him!” (Lk 9:35). If it is Jesus who welcomes us, we too want to welcome him and listen to his words; it is precisely through the welcome we give to Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, that the Holy Spirit transforms us, lights up our way to the future, and enables us joyfully to advance along that way with wings of hope (cf. *Lumen Fidei*, 7).

But what can we do? “*Bota fé* – put on faith”. The World Youth Day Cross has proclaimed these words throughout its pilgrimage in Brazil. “Put on faith”: what does this mean? When we prepare a plate of food and we see that it needs salt, well, we “put on” salt; when it needs oil, then you “put on” oil. “To put on”, that is, to place on top of, to pour over. And so it is in our life, dear young friends: if we want it to have real meaning and fulfilment, as you want and as you deserve, I say to each one of you, “Put on faith”, and life will take on a new flavour, life will have a compass to show you the way; “put on hope” and every one of your days will be enlightened and your horizon will no longer be dark, but luminous; “put on love”, and your life will be like a house built on rock, your journey will be joyful, because you will find many friends to journey with you. Put on faith, put on hope, put on love! All together: “put on faith”, “put on hope”, “put on love”.

But who can give us all this? In the Gospel we hear the answer: Christ. “This is my Son, my chosen one. Listen to him!” Jesus brings God to us and us to God. With him, our life is transformed and renewed, and we can see reality with new eyes, from Jesus’ standpoint, with his own eyes (cf. *Lumen Fidei*, 18). For this reason, I say to every one of you today: “Put on Christ!” in your life, and you will find a friend in whom you can always trust; “put on Christ” and you will see

the wings of hope spreading and letting you journey with joy towards the future; “put on Christ” and your life will be full of his love; it will be a fruitful life. Because we all want to have a fruitful life, one that is life-giving for others.

Today, it would be good for all of us to ask ourselves sincerely: in whom do we place our trust? In ourselves, in material things, or in Jesus? We all have the temptation often to put ourselves at the centre, to believe that we are the axis of the universe, to believe that we alone build our lives or to think that our life can only be happy if built on possessions, money, or power. But we all know that it is not so. Certainly, possessions, money and power can give a momentary thrill, the illusion of being happy, but they end up possessing us and making us always want to have more, never satisfied. And we end up “full”, but not nourished, and it is very sad to see young people “full”, but weak. Young people must be strong, nourished by the faith and not filled with other things! “Put on Christ” in your life, place your trust in him and you will never be disappointed! You see how faith accomplishes a revolution in us, one which we can call Copernican; it removes us from the centre and puts God at the centre; faith immerses us in his love and gives us security, strength, and hope. Seemingly, nothing has changed; yet, in the depths of our being, everything is different. With God, peace, consolation, gentleness, courage, serenity and joy, which are all fruits of the Holy Spirit (cf. *Gal 5:22*), find a home in our heart; then our very being is transformed; our way of thinking and acting is made new, it becomes Jesus’ own, God’s own, way of thinking and acting. Dear friends, faith is revolutionary and today I ask you: are you open to entering into this revolutionary wave of faith? Only by entering into this wave will your young lives make sense and so be fruitful!

Dear young people: “Put on Christ” in your lives. In these days, Christ awaits you in his word; listen carefully to him and his presence will arouse your heart; “Put on Christ”: he awaits you in the sacrament of Penance, with his mercy he will cure all the wounds caused by sin. Do not be afraid to ask God’s forgiveness, because he never tires of forgiving us, like a father who loves us. God is pure mercy! “Put on Christ”: he is waiting for you also in the Eucharist, the sacrament of his presence and his sacrifice of love, and he is waiting for you also in the humanity of the many young people who will enrich you with their friendship, encourage you by their witness to the faith, and teach you the language of love, goodness and service.

You too, dear young people, can be joyful witnesses of his love, courageous witnesses of his Gospel, carrying to this world a ray of his light. Let yourselves be loved by Christ, he is a friend that will not disappoint.

“It is good for us to be here”, putting on Christ in our lives, putting on the faith, hope and love which he gives us. Dear friends, in this celebration we have welcomed the image of *Our Lady of Aparecida*. In our prayer to Mary, we ask her to teach us to follow Jesus, that she may teach us to be disciples and missionaries. Like her, may we say “Yes” to God. Let us ask that her maternal heart intercede for us, so that our hearts may be open to loving Jesus and making others love him.

Dear young people, Jesus is waiting for us. Jesus is counting on us. Amen.

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