



POPE'S MESSAGE FOR TWENTY-EIGHTH WORLD YOUTH DAY

"Go and make disciples of all nations!" is the title of the Holy Father's Message for the twenty-eighth World Youth Day 2013, which will take place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in July 2013. Some excerpts from the English language version of the text are given below.

"Before all else, I invite you once more to take part in this important event. The celebrated statue of Christ the Redeemer overlooking that beautiful Brazilian city will be an eloquent symbol for us. Christ's open arms are a sign of his willingness to embrace all those who come to him, and his heart represents his immense love for everyone and for each of you. Let yourselves be drawn to Christ! Experience this encounter along with all the other young people who will converge on Rio for the next World Youth Day! Accept Christ's love and you will be the witnesses so needed by our world".

1. A pressing call

"History shows how many young people, by their generous gift of self, made a great contribution to the Kingdom of God and the development of this world by proclaiming the Gospel. Filled with enthusiasm, they brought the Good News of God's Love made manifest in Christ; they used the means and possibilities then available, which were far inferior to those we have today. ... Many young people today seriously question whether life is something good, and have a hard time finding their way. More generally, however, young people look at the difficulties of our world and ask themselves: is there anything I can do? The light of faith illumines this darkness. It helps us to understand that every human life is priceless because each of us is the fruit of God's love. God loves everyone, even those who have fallen away from him or disregard him. God waits patiently. Indeed, God gave his Son to die and rise again in order to free us radically from evil.

"The Church, in continuing this mission of evangelisation, is also counting on you. ... You are the first missionaries among your contemporaries! At the end of the Second Vatican Council – whose fiftieth anniversary we are celebrating this year – the Servant of God Paul VI consigned a message to the youth of the world. ... It concluded with the words: 'Build with enthusiasm a better world than what we have today!' This invitation remains timely. We are passing through a very particular period of history. Technical advances have given us unprecedented possibilities for interaction between people and nations. But the globalisation of these relationships will be positive and help the world to grow in humanity only if it is founded on love rather than on materialism. Love is the only thing that can fill hearts and bring people together. God is love. When we forget God, we lose hope and become unable to love others. That is why it is so necessary to testify to God's presence so that others can experience it. The salvation of humanity depends on this, as well as the salvation of each of us".

2. Become Christ's disciples

"This missionary vocation comes to you for another reason as well, and that is because it is necessary for our personal journey in faith. ... When you proclaim the Gospel, you yourselves grow as you become more deeply rooted in Christ and mature as Christians. Missionary commitment is an essential dimension of faith. We cannot be true believers if we do not evangelise".

"What does it mean to be a missionary? Above all, it means being a disciple of Christ. It means listening ever anew to the invitation to follow him and look to him. ... I encourage you to think of the gifts you have received from God so that you can pass them on to others in turn. Learn to reread your personal history. Be conscious of the wonderful legacy passed down to you from previous generations. ... Let us never forget that we are links in a great chain of men and women who have transmitted the truth of the faith and who depend on us to pass it on to others. Being a missionary presupposes knowledge of this legacy, which is the faith of the Church. It is necessary to know what you believe in, so that you can proclaim it".

3. Go forth!

"Jesus sent his disciples forth on mission with this command: "Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation. The one who believes and is baptised will be saved". To evangelise means to bring the Good News of salvation to others and to let them know that this Good News is a person: Jesus Christ. ... The more we know Christ, the more we want to talk about him. The more we speak with Christ, the more we want to speak about him. The more we are won over by Christ, the more we want to draw others to him. ... It is the Spirit of love, therefore, who is the driving force behind our mission. The Spirit impels us to go out from ourselves and to "go forth" to evangelise. Dear young people, allow yourselves to be led on by the power of God's love. Let that love overcome the tendency to remain enclosed in your own world with your own problems and your own habits".

4. Gather all nations

"The risen Christ sent his disciples forth to bear witness to his saving presence before all the nations, because God in his superabundant love wants everyone to be saved and no one to be lost. ... Open your eyes and look around you. ...The 'nations' that we are invited to reach out to are not only other countries in the world. They are also the different areas of our lives, such as our families, communities, places of study and work, groups of friends and places where we spend our free time. The joyful proclamation of the Gospel is meant for all the areas of our lives, without exception".

"I would like to emphasise two areas where your missionary commitment is all the more necessary. ... The first is the field of social communications, particularly the world of the internet. ... It falls, in particular, to young people, who have an almost spontaneous affinity for the new means of communication, to take on the responsibility for the evangelisation of this 'digital continent'. ... The second area is that of travel and migration. Nowadays more and more young people travel, sometimes for their studies or work, and at other times for pleasure. I am also thinking of the movements of migration which involve millions of people, very often young, who go to other regions or countries for financial or social reasons. Here too we can find providential opportunities for sharing the Gospel".

5. Make disciples!

"Proclaiming Christ is not only a matter of words, but something which involves one's whole life and translates into signs of love. It is the love that Christ has poured into our hearts which makes us evangelisers. Consequently, our love must become more and more like Christ's own love. We should always be prepared, like the Good Samaritan, to be attentive to those we meet, to listen, to be understanding and to help. In this way we can lead those who are searching for the truth and for meaning in life to God's house, the Church, where hope and salvation abide. ... The main way that we have to "make disciples" is through Baptism and catechesis. This means leading the people we are evangelising to encounter the living Christ above all in his word and in the sacraments. In this way they can believe in him, they can

come to know God and to live in his grace. ... Ask the Holy Spirit for help. The Spirit will show you the way to know and love Christ even more fully, and to be creative in spreading the Gospel".

6. Firm in the faith

"Whenever you feel inadequate, incapable and weak in proclaiming and witnessing to the faith, do not be afraid. evangelisation is not our initiative, and it does not depend on our talents. It is a faithful and obedient response to God's call and so it is not based on our power but on God's. ... For this reason, I encourage you to make prayer and the sacraments your foundation. Authentic evangelisation is born of prayer and sustained by prayer. We must first speak with God in order to be able to speak about God. ... Find in the Eucharist the wellspring of your life of faith and Christian witness. ... Approach the sacrament of Reconciliation frequently. ... Make an effort to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation ... Confirmation is, like the Eucharist, a sacrament of mission, for it gives us the strength and love of the Holy Spirit to profess fearlessly our faith. I also encourage you to practise Eucharistic adoration".

"If you follow this path, Christ himself will give you the ability to be completely faithful to his word and to bear faithful and courageous witness to him. At times you will be called to give proof of your perseverance, particularly when the word of God is met with rejection or opposition. In certain areas of the world, some of you suffer from the fact that you cannot bear public witness to your faith in Christ due to the lack of religious freedom. Some have already paid with their lives the price of belonging to the Church. I ask you to remain firm in the faith, confident that Christ is at your side in every trial".

7. With the whole Church

"If you are to remain firm in professing the Christian faith wherever you are sent, you need the Church. No one can bear witness to the Gospel alone. Jesus sent forth his disciples on mission together. ... Our witness is always given as members of the Christian community, and our mission is made fruitful by the communion lived in the Church. It is by our unity and love for one another that others will recognise us as Christ's disciples".

8. "Here I am, Lord!"

"I would ask all of you to hear, in the depths of your heart, Jesus' call to proclaim his Gospel. As the great statue of Christ the Redeemer in Rio de Janeiro shows, his heart is open with love for each and every person, and his arms are open wide to reach out to everyone. Be yourselves the heart and arms of Jesus! Go forth and bear witness to his love! Be a new generation of missionaries, impelled by love and openness to all!"

"This call, which I make to the youth of the whole world, has a particular resonance for you, dear young people of Latin America! During the Fifth General Conference of the Latin American Bishops, in Aparecida in 2007, the Bishops launched a "continental mission". Young people form a majority of the population in South America and they are an important and precious resource for the Church and society. ... Transmit the enthusiasm of your faith to your contemporaries from all over the world!"

Vatican City, 16 November 2012 (Vatican Information Service)