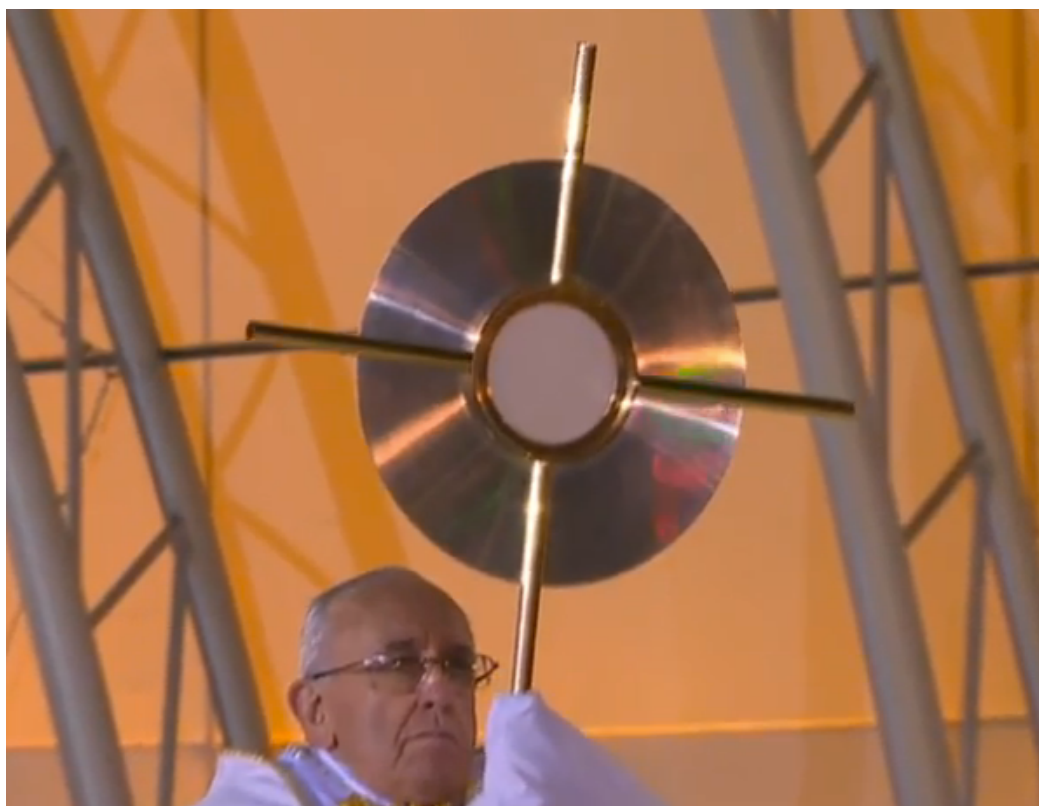




PRAYER VIGIL WITH THE YOUNG PEOPLE



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

PRAYER VIGIL WITH THE YOUNG PEOPLE

ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS

WATERFRONT OF COPACABANA, RIO DE JANEIRO
SATURDAY, 27 JULY 2013

VIDEO

Dear Young Friends,

Seeing you all present here today, I think of the story of Saint Francis of Assisi. In front of the crucifix he heard the voice of Jesus saying to him: "Francis, go, rebuild my house". The young Francis responded readily and generously to the Lord's call to rebuild his house. But which house? Slowly but surely, Francis came to realize that it was not a question of repairing a stone building, but about doing his part for the life of the Church. It was a matter of being at the service of the Church, loving her and working to make the countenance of Christ shine ever more brightly in her.

Today too, as always, the Lord needs you, young people, for his Church. My friends, the Lord needs you! Today too, he is calling each of you to follow him in his Church and to be missionaries. The Lord is calling you today! Not the masses, but you, and you, and you, each one of you. Listen to what he is saying to you in your heart. I think that we can learn something from what has taken place in these days, of how we had to cancel, due to bad weather, this Vigil in the *Campus Fidei*, at Guaratiba. Is the Lord not telling us, perhaps, that we ourselves are the true field of faith, the true *Campus Fidei*, and not some geographical location? Yes, it is true – each one of us, each one of you, me, everyone! To be missionary disciples means to know that we are the Field of Faith of God! Starting with the name of the place where we are, *Campus Fidei*, the field of faith, I have thought of three images that can help us understand better what it means to be a disciple and a missionary. First, a field is a place for sowing seeds; second, a field is a training ground; and third, a field is a construction site.

1. First: *A field is a place for sowing seeds.* We all know the parable where Jesus speaks of a sower who went out to sow seeds in the field; some seed fell on the path, some on rocky ground, some among thorns, and could not grow; other seed fell on good soil and brought forth much fruit (cf. *Mt 13:1-9*). Jesus himself explains the meaning of the parable: the seed is the word of God sown in our hearts (cf. *Mt 13:18-23*). Today . . . every day, but today in a particular way, Jesus is sowing the seed. When we accept the word of God, then we are the Field of Faith! Please, let Christ and his word enter your life; let the seed of the Word of God enter, let it blossom, and let it grow. God will take care of everything, but let him work in you and bring about this growth.

Jesus tells us that the seed which fell on the path or on the rocky ground or among the thorns bore no fruit. I believe that we can ask ourselves honestly: What kind of ground are we? What kind of ground do we want to be? Maybe sometimes we are like the path: we hear the Lord's word but it changes nothing in our lives because we let ourselves be numbed by all the superficial voices competing for our attention. I ask you, but do not respond immediately; everyone respond in his or her own heart: am I a young person who is numb? Or perhaps we are like the rocky ground: we receive Jesus with enthusiasm, but we falter and, faced with difficulties, we don't have the courage to swim against the tide. Everyone of us respond in his or her heart: am I courageous or am I a coward? Or maybe we are like the thorny ground: negativity, negative feelings choke the Lord's word in us (cf. *Mt 13:18-22*). Do I have the habit of playing both sides in my heart: do I make a good impression for God or for the devil? Do I want to receive the seed from Jesus and at the same time water the thorns and the weeds that grow in my heart? But today I am sure that the seed is able to fall on good soil. We are listening to these witnesses, of how the seed has fallen on good soil. "No, Father, I am not good soil; I am a disaster, and I am full of stones, of thorns, of everything." Yes, maybe this is so on the surface, but free a little piece, a small piece of good soil, and let the seed fall there and watch how it grows. I know that you want to be good soil, true Christians, authentic Christians, not part-time Christians: "starchy", aloof and Christian in "appearance only". I know that you don't want to be duped by a false freedom, always at the beck and call of momentary fashions and fads. I know that you are aiming high, at long-lasting decisions which are meaningful. Is that true, or am I wrong? Am I right? Good; if it is true, let's do this: in silence, let us all look into our hearts and each one of us tell Jesus that we want to receive the seed of his Word. Say to him: Jesus, look upon the stones, the thorns, and the weeds that I have, but look also upon this small piece of ground that I offer to you so that the seed may enter my heart. In silence, let us allow the seed of Jesus to enter our hearts. Remember this moment. Everyone knows the seed that has been received. Allow it to grow, and God will nurture it.

2. *The field. Beyond being a place of sowing, the field is a training ground.* Jesus asks us to follow him for life, he asks us to be his disciples, to "play on his team". Most of you love sports! Here in Brazil, as in other countries, football is a national passion. Right? Now, what do players do when they are asked to join a team? They have to train, and to train a lot! The same is true of our lives as the Lord's disciples. Saint Paul, describing

Christians, tells us: “athletes deny themselves all sorts of things; they do this to win a crown of leaves that withers, but we a crown that is imperishable” (1 Cor9:25). Jesus offers us something bigger than the World Cup! Something bigger than the World Cup! Jesus offers us the possibility of a fruitful life, a life of happiness; he also offers us a future with him, an endless future, in eternal life. That is what Jesus offers us. But he asks us to pay admission, and the cost of admission is that we train ourselves “to get in shape”, so that we can face every situation in life undaunted, bearing witness to our faith, by talking with him in prayer. Father, are you asking us all to pray? I ask you all ... but reply in the silence of your heart, not aloud: do I pray? Do I speak with Jesus, or am I frightened of silence? Do I allow the Holy Spirit to speak in my heart? Do I ask Jesus: what do you want me to do, what do you want from my life? This is training. Ask Jesus, speak to Jesus, and if you make a mistake in your life, if you should fall, if you should do something wrong, don't be afraid. Jesus, look at what I have done, what must I now do? Speak continually with Jesus, in the good times and in the bad, when you do right, and when you do wrong. Do not fear him! This is prayer. And through this, you train yourselves in dialogue with Jesus, in this path of being missionary disciples. By the sacraments, which make his life grow within us and conform us to Christ. By loving one another, learning to listen, to understand, to forgive, to be accepting and to help others, everybody, with no one excluded or ostracized. Dear young people, be true “athletes of Christ”!

3. *And third: A field is a construction site.* We are seeing this happen before us with our own eyes: young people have engaged and given themselves to the work of building up the Church. When our heart is good soil which receives the word of God, when “we build up a sweat” in trying to live as Christians, we experience something tremendous: we are never alone, we are part of a family of brothers and sisters, all journeying on the same path: we are part of the Church. These young people were not alone, but together they created a path and built up the Church; together they have done what Saint Francis did, built up and repaired the Church. I ask you: do you want to build up the Church? [Yes ...] Are you encouraged to do so? [Yes ...] And tomorrow, will you have forgotten the “yes” you have spoken today? [No ...] That makes me happy! We are part of the Church, indeed, we are building up the Church and we are making history. Young people, please: don't put yourselves at the tailend of history. Be active members! Go on the offensive! Play down the field, build a better world, a world of brothers and sisters, a world of justice, of love, of peace, of fraternity, of solidarity. Play always on the offensive! Saint Peter tells us that we are living stones, which form a spiritual edifice (cf. 1 Pet 2:5). As we look at this platform, we see that it is in the shape of a church, built up with living stones. In the Church of Jesus, we ourselves are the living stones. Jesus is asking us to build up his Church; each one of us is a living stone, a small part of the edifice; when the rain comes, if this piece is missing, there are leaks and water comes in. Don't build a little chapel which holds only a small group of persons. Jesus asks us to make his living Church so large that it can hold all of humanity, that it can be a home for everyone! To me, to you, to each of us he says: “Go and make disciples of all nations”. Tonight, let us answer him: Yes, Lord, I too want to be a living stone; together we want to build up the Church of Jesus! I want to go forth and build up the Church of Christ! Are you eager to make this happen again? I want to go out and build up the Church of Christ, let us say this together ... [the young people repeat]. You must always remember that you have said this together.

Your young hearts want to build a better world. I have been closely following the news reports of the many young people who throughout the world have taken to the streets in order to express their desire for a more just and fraternal society. Young people in the streets. It is the young who want to be the protagonists of change. Please, don't leave it to others to be the protagonists of change. You are the ones who hold the future! You ... Through you the future is fulfilled in the world. I ask you also to be protagonists of this transformation. Continue to overcome apathy, offering a Christian response to the social and political anxieties, which are arising in various parts of the world. I ask you to be builders of the world, to work for a better world. Dear young people, please, don't be observers of life, but get involved. Jesus did not remain an observer, but he immersed himself. Don't be observers, but immerse yourself in the reality of life, as Jesus did.

But one question remains: Where do we start? Whom do we ask to begin this work? Some people once asked Mother Teresa of Calcutta what needed to change in the Church, and which wall should they start with? They asked her, where is the starting point? And she replied, you and I are the starting point! This woman showed determination! She knew where to start. And today I make her words my own and I say to you: shall we begin? Where? With you and me! Each one of you, once again in silence, ask yourself: if I must begin with myself, where exactly do I start? Each one of you, open his or her heart, so that Jesus may tell you where to start.

Dear friends, never forget that you are the field of faith! You are Christ's athletes! You are called to build a more beautiful Church and a better world. Let us lift our gaze to Our Lady. Mary helps us to follow Jesus, she gives us the example by her own "yes" to God: "I am the servant of the Lord; let it be done to me as you say" (*Lk 1:38*). All together, let us join Mary in saying to God: let it be done to me as you say. Amen!