

Pope to young people: Go beyond your comfort zones and build peace

In his message for the 40th World Youth Day, Pope Leo XIV encouraged young people not to “follow those who use the words of faith to divide” but to work for reconciliation, “becoming active artisans of peace”.

The annual World Youth Day, celebrated by churches at the diocesan level, takes place on 23 November in preparation for the global gathering in Seoul in 2027.

Remarking on the theme of this observance – “You also are my witnesses, because you have been with me”, the Pope said as pilgrims of hope and by power of the Holy Spirit we prepare ourselves to become courageous witnesses of Christ, and he focused on two aspects of witness: “our friendship with Jesus, which we receive from God as a gift, and our commitment to be builders of peace in society”.

Friends, therefore witnesses

Explaining that Christian witness arises from friendship with the Lord, who was crucified and rose for the salvation of all, the Pope said, “This witness is not to be confused with ideological propaganda, for it is an authentic principle of interior transformation and social awareness”.

Jesus, he continued, fully knows who we are, our hearts and our indignation in the face of discrimination and injustice.

“He does not want us to be servants, nor ‘activists’ of a political party; he calls us to be with him as friends, so that our lives may be renewed”.

He added that “His example reminds us that true witnesses do not seek to occupy the centre stage, nor to bind their followers to themselves. True witnesses are humble and inwardly free, above all from themselves, that is, from the pretence of being the centre of attention. Therefore, they are free to listen, to understand, and also to speak the truth to everyone, even in the presence of those who are powerful”. “True Christian witnesses are humble and free”.

Thus, he added, a true Christian witness is recognising and pointing to Jesus when he appears, as he is the only one who saves us.

To that end, Pope Leo said, “Pope Francis insisted so often that if we do not go beyond ourselves and our comfort zones, if we do not go to the poor and those who feel excluded from the Kingdom of God, we cannot encounter Christ and bear witness to him”.

Witnesses, therefore missionaries

The Holy Father then reminded young people to never forget that many of their peers “are exposed to violence, forced to use weapons, separated from their loved ones, and compelled to migrate or flee. Many lack education and other essential goods”. “Many young people are exposed to violence, forced to use weapons, separated from their loved ones, and compelled to migrate or flee. Many lack education and other essential goods”.

But all of them, he said, “share with you the search for meaning and the insecurity that accompanies it, the discomfort of growing social and work pressures, the difficulty of dealing with family crises, the painful feeling of a lack of opportunities, as well as the remorse for mistakes they have made”.

“You can stand alongside other young people, walk with them and show that God, in Jesus, has drawn close to each person”, he affirmed.

And he invited young Christians to continue to seek out Jesus’ friends and witnesses in the Bible who show us how they discovered the true meaning of life through their living relationship with Christ.

“Indeed, our deepest questions are not heard or answered by endlessly scrolling on our cell phones, which captures our attention but leaves us with tired minds and empty hearts”, he said, adding that “The fulfilment of our authentic desires always comes through going beyond ourselves”.

Fraternity as a bond of peace

Pope Leo urged young people to overcome indifference and spiritual laziness and make efforts to nurture bonds of friendship and fraternity, working together to build new living conditions for all.

“Do not follow those who use the words of faith to divide; instead, make plans to

remove inequalities and reconcile divided and oppressed communities”, he said.

Dear young people, dear friends, the Pope concluded, “Let us listen to the voice of God within us and overcome our selfishness, becoming active artisans of peace”. “That peace, which is a gift of the risen Lord, will become visible in the world through the common witness of those who carry his Spirit in their hearts”.

** Published in Vatican News. By: Linda Bordoni. Photo: Vatican Media.*