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## Pope Francis: “Europe needs to retrieve passion and enthusiasm”

“The Mediterranean is the cradle of civilization and a cradle is for life! It is not tolerable that it become a tomb, neither should it be a place of conflict”, said **Pope Francis**, who dedicated the catechesis of today’s general audience in Saint Peter’s Square to the recent apostolic journey in Marseille, where he participated in the conclusion of the Rencontres Méditerranéennes (Mediterranean Meetings). “This is the dream, this is the challenge” – Francis said - “that the Mediterranean might recover its vocation, that of being a laboratory of civilization and peace.” “The Mediterranean Sea is the complete opposite of the clash between civilizations, war, human trafficking”, the Pope’s thesis: “It is the exact opposite because the Mediterranean is a means of communication between Africa, Asia, and Europe; between the north and the south, the east and the west, persons and cultures, peoples and tongues, philosophies and religions.” “Of course, the sea is always an abyss to overcome in some way, and it can even become dangerous”, the Pope remarked: “But its waters safeguard treasures of life; its waves and its winds carry vessels of all types. From its eastern shore, two thousand years ago, the Gospel of Jesus Christ departed. Of course, this [the proclamation of the Gospel] does not happen magically, neither is it accomplished once and for all. It is the fruit of a journey in which each generation is called to travel a piece, reading the signs of the times in which it lives.”

From the Marseille event “came out an outlook on the Mediterranean that I would call simply human, not ideological, not strategic, not politically correct nor instrumental; no, human, that is, capable of referring everything to the primary value of the human person and his or her inviolable dignity”,

Francis said. “Then, at the same time, a *hopeful outlook* came out”, continued the Holy Father: “Today, this is surprising– when you hear testimonies from those who have lived through inhuman situations, or who have shared them, and they themselves give you a profession of hope. And also a fraternal outlook.” The meeting in Marseille, the Pope pointed out, comes after similar meetings that took place in Bari in 2020, and in Florence last year. “It was not an isolated event, but a step forward on the itinerary that began with the Mediterranean Colloquia organized by Giorgio La Pira, the Mayor of Florence, at the end of the 1950s. It is a step forward to respond today to the appeal launched by Saint Paul VI in his Encyclical *Populorum progressio*, to promote ‘a more humane world community, where all can give and receive, and where the progress of some is not bought at the expense of others.’” “**The Mediterranean must be a message of hope**”, Francis reiterated in unscripted remarks: “this hope must not ‘evaporate’; no, rather, it needs to be organized, concretized through long, medium and short-term actions” – Francis’ appeal:

“So that people, in complete dignity, can choose to emigrate or not to emigrate.”

“Hope needs to be restored to our European societies, especially to the new generations”, is the Pope’s second invitation. In fact, he said, “how can we welcome others if we ourselves do not first have a horizon open to the future? How can young people, who are poor in hope, closed in on their private lives, worried about managing their own precariousness, open themselves to meeting others and to sharing?” “Our societies, many times sickened by individualism, by consumerism and by empty escapism, need to open themselves, their souls and spirits need to be oxygenized, and then they will be able to read the crisis as an opportunity and deal with it positively”, the Pope’s analysis:

“Europe needs to retrieve passion and enthusiasm,

And I can say that I found passion and enthusiasm in Marseille: in its Pastor, Cardinal Aveline; in the

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priests and consecrated persons; in the faithful laity dedicated to charity, to education; in the People of God who showed great warmth during the Mass in the Vélodrome Stadium.” “thank all of them and the President of the Republic, whose presence testified that all of France was paying attention to the event in Marseille”, the Pope’s homage to Macron: “May Our Lady, whom the people of Marseille venerate as Notre Dame de la Garde, accompany the journey of the peoples of the Mediterranean so that this region might become what it has always been called to be – a mosaic of civilization and hope.” “Remember your brothers and sisters in Ukraine, forced to leave their war-torn homeland, seeking help, refuge and the benevolence of your country. Demonstrate to them the welcoming spirit of the Gospel”, the Pope said in his greeting to Polish-speaking faithful at the end of the general audience. “Today’s liturgical commemoration of Saint Vincent de Paul reminds us of the central importance of love of neighbour”, Francis said addressing the Italian-speaking faithful.

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