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## Pope Francis writes to young people: “Not tourists but pilgrims”

“Today, we too live in times marked by dramatic situations that generate despair and prevent us from looking to the future with serenity: the tragedy of war, social injustices, inequalities, hunger and the exploitation of human beings and the natural environment”, writes **Pope Francis** in his message for World Youth Day, to be celebrated this year at diocesan level on 24 November, centered on the following theme: “Those who hope in the Lord... will run and not be weary” (Cf. *Is* 40:31). “Often the ones who pay the highest price are precisely young people. You sense the uncertainty of the future and are not sure about where your dreams will lead. In this way, you can be tempted to live without hope, as prisoners of boredom, depression and even be drawn to risk-taking and destructive behaviours”, remarks the Pope. In his message ahead of the Jubilee, the Holy Father focuses on two dimensions of pilgrimage: to walk and tiredness.

“Looking at life from a balcony is not enough”,

reiterates the Pope, highlighting human life as a pilgrimage to God. “Our goals, achievements and successes along the way, if they remain only material, will, after an initial moment of satisfaction, still leave us hungry, longing for something greater”, Francis warns, adding that it is “normal” to feel tired after the initial enthusiasm. “In some cases, anxiety and inner fatigue are brought on by social pressures, the need to attain certain levels of success in our studies, our work and our personal life”, he points out. “This produces a certain despondency, as we live running from one thing to another in an empty “activism” that makes us fill our days with a thousand things and, in spite of this, feel that we never manage to do enough and never quite measure up”, is the Pope’s analysis, for whom “a questa stanchezza si unisce spesso la noia, quello stato di apatia e di insoddisfazione di chi non si mette in cammino, non si decide, non sceglie, non rischia mai, e preferisce rimanere nella propria comfort zone, chiuso in sé stesso, vedendo e giudicando il mondo da dietro uno schermo, senza mai sporcarsi le mani con i problemi, con gli altri, con la vita”. “This kind of tiredness is a kind of wet cement in which we stand; eventually it hardens, weighs us down, paralyzes us and prevents us from moving forward”, the Pope warns: “I prefer the tiredness of those who are moving forward, not the ennui of those who stand still with no desire to move!” The solution to tiredness is “is not to stand still and rest. It is to *set out* and become pilgrims of hope.”

“Walk in hope!”,

are the Pope’s guiding words, since “hope overcomes all weariness, every crisis and every worry. It is a new kind of strength enabling us to persevere in the race, to see beyond present difficulties and to press forward to the goal of communion with him and the fullness of eternal life. If a beautiful goal exists, if life has an ultimate meaning, if nothing of what I dream, plan and accomplish will ever be lost, then it is worth the effort to keep walking, exerting ourselves, overcoming obstacles and fatigue, because the ultimate prize is magnificent beyond measure!”. Times of crisis, the Pope explains, “are not wasted or useless: they can become important times of growth. They are moments when hope is purified!” “It can happen that our initial enthusiasm for school or work, or for following Christ – whether in marriage, the priesthood or consecrated life – can be followed by moments of crisis, that make life seem like a difficult trek in the desert.” However, in crises “many false ‘hopes’, hopes too small for our heart, fade into significance; they are revealed for what they are and we find ourselves alone in facing the fundamental questions of life, with no illusions. And in those times, each of us can ask: what are the hopes on which I have based my life? Are they real hopes or simply mirages?”. “At those times, the Lord does not abandon us; Like a father, he draws near to us and constantly gives us the bread that renews our strength for the journey”, Francis assures, and recalling the figure of Blessed Carlo Acutis calls on the young “to rediscover the great gift of the Eucharist.” “All your inner

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weariness can find repose in the Lord”, assures the Papa: “When the weariness of the journey weighs you down, come back to Jesus, learn to rest in him and abide with him, for those who hope in the Lord... will run and not be weary.”

“Do not set out as mere tourists, but as true pilgrims”,

is the final exhortation in view of the upcoming Jubilee. For the Pope, there are three fundamental attitudes to approach this experience: “First, thanksgiving, with hearts open to praise God for his many gifts, especially the gift of life. Then, a spirit of seeking, as an expression of our heart’s unquenchable thirst to encounter the Lord. And finally, penance, which helps us to look within, to acknowledge the wrong paths and decisions we have at times taken and, in this way, to be converted to the Lord and to the light of his Gospel.”

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