



The Holy See

HOLY MASS FOR THE HANDING OVER OF THE WYD CROSS

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

Saint Peter's Basilica

Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe - Sunday, 22 November 2020

[Multimedia]

We have just heard the page of the Matthew's Gospel that comes immediately before the account of Christ's Passion. Before pouring out his love for us on the cross, Jesus shares his final wishes. He tells us that the good we do to one of our least brothers and sisters – whether hungry or thirsty, a stranger, in need, sick or in prison – we do to him (cf. *Mt* 25:37-40). In this way, the Lord gives us his “gift list” for the eternal wedding feast he will share with us in heaven. Those gifts are the works of mercy that make our life eternal. Each of us can ask: Do I put these works into practice? Do I do anything for someone in need? Or do I do good only for my loved ones and my friends? Do I help someone who cannot give anything back to me? Am I the friend of a poor person? And there are many other similar questions we can ask ourselves. “There I am”, Jesus says to you, “I am waiting for you there, where you least think and perhaps may not even want to look: there, in the poor”. *I am there*, where the prevailing mentality, according to which life is good if it is good for me, least expects me to be. *I am there*. Jesus also says these words to you, young people, as you strive to realize your dreams in life.

I am there. Jesus spoke these words centuries ago, to a young soldier. He was eighteen years old and not yet baptized. One day he saw a poor man who was begging people for help but received none, since “everyone walked by”. That young man, “seeing that others were not moved to compassion, understood that the poor person was there for him. Yet he had nothing on him, only his uniform. He cut his cloak in two and gave half to the poor person, and was met with mocking laughter from some of the bystanders. The following night he had a dream: he saw Jesus, wearing the half of the cloak he had wrapped around the poor person, and he heard him say: ‘Martin, you covered *me* with this cloak’” (cf. SULPICIUS SEVERUS, *Vita Martini*, III). Saint Martin was that

young man. He had that dream because, without knowing it, he had acted like the righteous in today's Gospel.

Dear young people, dear brothers and sisters, let us not give up on *great dreams*. Let us not settle only for what is necessary. The Lord does not want us to narrow our horizons or to remain parked on the roadside of life. He wants us to race boldly and joyfully towards lofty goals. We were not created to dream about vacations or the weekend, but to make God's dreams come true in this world. God made us capable of dreaming, so that we could embrace the beauty of life. The works of mercy are the most beautiful works in life. They go right to the heart of our great dreams. If you are dreaming about real glory, not the glory of this passing world but the glory of God, this is the path to follow. Read today's Gospel passage again and reflect on it. For the works of mercy give glory to God more than anything else. Listen carefully: the works of mercy give glory to God more than anything else. In the end we will be judged on the works of mercy.

Yet how do we begin to make great dreams come true? With *great choices*. Today's Gospel speaks to us about this as well. Indeed, at the last judgement, the Lord will judge us on the choices we have made. He seems almost not to judge, but merely to separate the sheep from the goats, whereas being good or evil depends on us. He only draws out the consequences of our choices, brings them to light and respects them. Life, we come to see, is a time for making robust, decisive, eternal choices. Trivial choices lead to a trivial life; great choices to a life of greatness. Indeed, we become what we choose, for better or for worse. If we choose to steal, we become thieves. If we choose to think of ourselves, we become self-centred. If we choose to hate, we become angry. If we choose to spend hours on a cell phone, we become addicted. Yet if we choose God, daily we grow in his love, and if we choose to love others, we find true happiness. Because the beauty of our choices depends on love. Remember this because it is true: *the beauty of our choices depends on love*. Jesus knows that if we are self-absorbed and indifferent, we remain paralyzed, but if we give ourselves to others, we become free. The Lord of life wants us to be full of life, and he tells us the secret of life: we come to possess it only by giving it away. This is a rule of life: we come to possess life, now and in eternity, only by giving it away.

It is true that there are obstacles that can make our choices difficult: fear, insecurity, so many unanswered questions... Love, however, demands that we move beyond these, and not keep wondering why life is the way it is, and expecting answers to fall down from heaven. The answer has come: it is the gaze of the Father who loves us and who has sent us his Son. No, love pushes us to go beyond the *why*, and instead to ask *for whom*, to pass from asking, "Why am I alive?" to "For whom am I living?" From "Why is this happening to me?" to "Whom can I help?" For whom? Not just for myself! Life is already full of choices we make for ourselves: what to study, which friends to have, what home to buy, what interests or hobbies to pursue. We can waste years thinking about ourselves, without ever actually starting to love. Alessandro Manzoni offered a good piece of advice: "We ought to aim rather at doing well than being well: and thus we should come, in the end, to be even better" (*I Promessi Sposi [The Betrothed]*, Chapter XXXVIII).

Not only doubts and questions can undermine great and generous choices, but many other obstacles as well every day. Feverish consumerism can overwhelm our hearts with superfluous things. An obsession with pleasure may seem the only way to escape problems, yet it simply postpones them. A fixation with our rights can lead us to neglect our responsibilities to others. Then, there is the great misunderstanding about love, which is more than powerful emotions, but primarily a gift, a choice and a sacrifice. The art of choosing well, especially today, means not seeking approval, not plunging into a consumerist mentality that discourages originality, and not giving into the cult of appearances. Choosing life means resisting the “throwaway culture” and the desire to have “everything now”, in order to direct our lives towards the goal of heaven, towards God’s dreams. To choose life is to live, and we were born to live, not just get by. A young man like yourselves, Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati, said this: “I want to live, not just get by”.

Each day, in our heart, we face many choices. I would like to give you one last piece of advice to help train you to choose well. If we look within ourselves, we can see two very different questions arising. One asks, “*What do I feel like doing?*” This question often proves misleading, since it suggests that what really counts is thinking about ourselves and indulging in our wishes and impulses. The question that the Holy Spirit plants in our hearts is a very different one: not “*What do you feel like doing?*” but “*What is best for you?*” That is the choice we have to make daily: what do I feel like doing or what is best for me? This interior discernment can result either in frivolous choices or in decisions that shape our lives – it depends on us. Let us look to Jesus and ask him for the courage to choose what is best for us, to enable us to follow him in the way of love. And in this way to discover joy. To live, and not just get by.

Remarks of the Holy Father at the Conclusion of Holy Mass

At the end of this Eucharistic celebration, I cordially greet all of you present and all those who join us through the media. A special greeting goes to the Panamanian and Portuguese young people, represented by the two delegations that will shortly take part in the significant ceremony of the passage of the Cross and the icon of Our Lady *Salus Populi Romani*, the symbols of the World Youth Days. This is an important step in the pilgrimage that will lead us to Lisbon in 2023.

And as we prepare for the next intercontinental edition of WYD, I would also like to renew its celebration in the local Churches. Thirty-five years after the establishment of WYD, after listening to various opinions and consulting the Dicastery for the Laity, the Family and Life, which is responsible for youth ministry, I have decided, beginning next year, to transfer the diocesan celebration of WYD from Palm Sunday to Christ the King Sunday. The centre of the celebration remains the Mystery of Jesus Christ the Redeemer of Man, as Saint John Paul II, the initiator and patron of WYD, always emphasized.

Dear young people, cry out with your life that Christ lives, that Christ reigns, that Christ is the Lord!

If you keep silent, I tell you the very stones will cry out! (cf. *Lk* 19:40).

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