"Christ is our future"

In his 3 May general audience, Pope Francis reflected on his recent apostolic journey to Hungary.

05/03/2023

Dear brothers and sisters, *buongiorno*!

Three days ago I returned from my trip to Hungary. I wish to thank all those who prepared and accompanied this visit with prayer, and to renew my gratitude to the

Authorities, the local Church, and the Hungarian people, a courageous people, rich in memory. During my stay in Budapest I was able to feel the affection of all Hungarians. Today I would like to tell you about this visit through two images: *roots* and *bridges*.

Roots. I went as a pilgrim to a people whose history—as St John Paul II said—has been marked by "many saints and heroes, surrounded by hosts of humble and hard-working people" (*Speech at the welcome ceremony*, Budapest, 6 September 1996). It's true: I have seen so many humble and hard-working people proudly cherish the bond with their roots. And among these roots, as the testimonies during the meetings with the local Church and with the young people made clear, there are first and foremost the saints: saints who gave their lives for the people, saints who bore witness to the Gospel of

love and who were lights in times of darkness; so many saints of the past who today exhort us to overcome the risk of defeatism and the fear of tomorrow, remembering that *Christ is our future*. The saints remind us of this: Christ is our future.

However, the solid Christian roots of the Hungarian people have been put to the test. Their faith was tested by fire. Indeed, during the atheist persecution of the 20th century, Christians were struck down violently, with bishops, priests, religious, and lay people killed or deprived of their freedom. And while attempts were made to cut down the tree of faith, the roots remained intact: there remained a hidden Church, but alive, strong, with the power of the Gospel. And in Hungary this last persecution, this communist oppression was preceded by the Nazi oppression, with the tragic deportation of a large Jewish

population. But in that atrocious genocide, many distinguished themselves by their resistance and their ability to protect the victims; and this was possible because the roots of living together were firm. We in Rome have a great Hungarian poet who has been through all these trials and tells young people of the need to fight for an ideal, not to be overcome by persecution, by discouragement. This poet is 92 years old today: Happy birthday, Edith Bruck!

But even today, as emerged in meetings with young people and the world of culture, freedom is under threat. How? Above all with kid gloves, by a consumerism that anaesthetises, where one is content with a little material well-being and, forgetting the past, one "floats" in a present made to the measure of the individual. This is the dangerous persecution of worldliness, brought

about by consumerism. But when the only thing that counts is thinking about oneself and doing what one likes, the roots suffocate. This is a problem throughout Europe, where dedicating oneself to others, feeling a sense of community, feeling the beauty of dreaming together and creating large families are in crisis. The whole of Europe is in crisis. So let us reflect on the importance of preserving the roots, because only by going deep will the branches grow upwards and bear fruit. Each of us can ask ourselves, even as a people, each of us: what are the most important roots in my life? Where am I rooted? Do I remember them, do I care for them?

After the roots comes the second image: *bridges*. Budapest, born 150 years ago from the union of three cities, is famous for the bridges that cross it and unite its parts. This recalled, especially in meetings with

the authorities, the importance of building bridges of peace between different peoples. This is, in particular, the vocation of Europe, which is called, as a "bridge of peace," to include differences and to welcome those who knock on its doors. In this sense, the humanitarian bridge created for so many refugees from neighbouring Ukraine, whom I was able to meet while also admiring the great network of charity of the Hungarian Church, is beautiful.

The country is also very committed to building "bridges for tomorrow": there is great concern for ecological care—and this is a very, very beautiful thing about Hungary—ecological care and a sustainable future, and work is being done to build bridges between the generations, between the old and the young, a challenge that cannot be renounced by anyone today. There

are also bridges that the Church, as emerged at the dedicated meeting, is called upon to stretch towards the people of today, because the proclamation of Christ cannot consist only in repeating the past, but always needs to be updated, so as to help the women and men of our time to rediscover Jesus. And, finally, recalling with gratitude the beautiful liturgical moments, the prayer with the Greek-Catholic community and the solemn Eucharistic Celebration that was so well attended, I think of the beauty of building bridges between believers: Sunday at Mass there were Christians of various rites and countries, and of different denominations, who work well together in Hungary. Building bridges, bridges of harmony and bridges of unity.

I was struck, on this visit, by the importance of music, which is a

characteristic feature of Hungarian culture.

Finally, I want to recall, at the beginning of the month of May, how very devoted the Hungarians are to the Holy Mother of God. Consecrated to her by the first king, Saint Stephen, they used to address her without pronouncing her name, out of respect, calling her only by the Queen's titles. To the Queen of Hungary, therefore, we entrust that dear country; to the Queen of Peace, we entrust the building of *bridges* in the world; to the Queen of Heaven, whom we acclaim at this Easter time, we entrust our hearts that they may be rooted in the love of God.