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Fraternity: The Answer to Today's Challenges

In his August 3 general audience, Pope Francis reflected on the recent World Youth Day in Poland and said that "the new generation of young people gave the answer to today's challenges. They gave a sign of hope, called fraternity."

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Dear Brothers and Sisters, good morning!

Today, I would like to reflect briefly on the Apostolic Journey I made in the past days to Poland.

The occasion of the journey was the World Youth Day, 25 years after that historic celebration at Czestochowa, shortly after the fall of the “Iron Curtain.” Over these 25 years, Poland has changed, Europe has changed and the world has changed, and this WYD became a prophetic sign for Poland, for Europe and for the world. The new generation of young people — inheritors and continuers of the pilgrimage initiated by Saint John Paul II — gave the answer to today’s challenge. They gave a sign of hope, and this sign is called fraternity, because, in fact, in this world at war, we need fraternity, closeness, dialogue and friendship. And this is a

sign of hope: when there is fraternity.

We begin precisely with young people, who were the first reason for the journey. Once again they answered the appeal: they came from all over the world — some of them are here! [he pointed to pilgrims in the Hall] — <It was> a celebration of colors, of different faces, languages and histories. I don't know how they do it: they speak different languages, but are able to understand one another! And why <is this so>? Because they have the will to go together, to build bridges of fraternity. They came also with their wounds, with their questions but especially with the joy of encountering one another; and, once again, they formed a mosaic of fraternity. One can speak of a mosaic of fraternity. An emblematic image of the World Youth Days is the multi-colored range of flags waved by the

young people: in fact, at the WYD the nations' flags become more beautiful, they are, so to speak, "purified," and the flags of nations in conflict among them also waved nearby. And this is beautiful! The flags are also here … Make them seen!

So, in this great Jubilee meeting, the young people of the world received the message of Mercy, to take it everywhere in spiritual and corporal works of mercy. I thank all the young people that came to Krakow! And I thank those that joined us from all parts of the earth! — as in many countries small Youth Days were held in connection with Krakow's. May the gift you received become a daily answer to the Lord's call. A memory full of affection goes to Susanna, the Roman girl of this diocese, who died immediately after having taken part in the WYD, at Vienna. May the Lord, who has certainly received her in

Heaven, comfort her relatives and friends.

During this Journey, I also visited the Shrine of Czestochowa. Before the icon of Our Lady, I received the gift of the gaze of the Mother, who, in a particular way, is Mother of the Polish people, of that noble nation that has suffered so much and, with the strength of faith and her maternal hand, has always risen again. I greeted some Poles here [in the Hall]. You are good, you are good! There, under that gaze, one understands the spiritual sense of this nation's journey, whose history is linked indissolubly to the Cross of Christ. There one touches with the hand the faith of the holy people of God, which keeps hope through trials; and it also keeps that wisdom that is a balance between tradition and innovation, between memory and future. And today Poland reminds the whole of Europe that the

Continent cannot have a future without its founding values, which in turn have the Christian vision of man at the center. Among these values is mercy, of which two great children of the Polish land were special apostles: Saint Faustina Kowalska and Saint John Paul II.

And, finally, this Journey also had the horizon of the world, a world called to respond to the challenge of a war "in pieces," which is threatening it. And here the great silence of the visit to Auschwitz-Birkenau was more eloquent than any word. In that silence I heard, I felt the presence of all the souls that passed by there; I felt the compassion, the mercy of God, which some holy souls were able to bring also to that abyss. In that great silence I prayed for all the victims of violence and of war. And there, in that place, I understood more than ever the value of the memory, not only as the memory of

past events, but as warning and responsibility for today and tomorrow, so that the seed of hatred and violence will not take root in the furrows of history. And in this memory of wars and of many wounds, of so many griefs experienced, there are also so many men and women of today, who suffer wars, so many of our brothers and sisters. Looking at that cruelty, in that concentration camp, I thought immediately of today's cruelties, which are similar: not so concentrated as in that place, but everywhere in the world; this world that is sick of cruelty, of pain, of war, of hatred, of sadness. And that is why I always ask you for prayer: may the Lord give us peace!

I thank the Lord and the Virgin Mary for all this. And I express again my gratitude to the President of Poland and to the other Authorities, to the Cardinal Archbishop of Krakow and

to the entire Polish Episcopate, and to all those that, in a thousand ways, made this event possible, which offered a sign of fraternity and peace to Poland, to Europe and to the world. I would also like to thank the young volunteers who worked for more than a year to bring this event forward; and also the media, those who work in the media: thank you so much for having made this Day seen in the whole world. And here I cannot forget Anna Maria Jacobini, an Italian journalist who lost her life there, suddenly. Let us also pray for her: she left us while carrying out her service.

Thank you!

(Translation by Zenit)

Link to homily at Holy Mass for World Youth Day (Sunday July 31)

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