



The Holy See

EXTRAORDINARY JUBILEE OF MERCY

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE JUBILEE FOR SOCIALLY EXCLUDED PEOPLE***

*Paul VI Audience Hall
Friday, 11 November 2016*

[Multimedia]

Thank you, Christian and Robert. And a thanks to all of you. For coming here, for meeting us, for meeting me, for praying for me. And, as Cardinal [Barbarin] said, your hands placed above my head, in the prayer of the imposition of hands, give me strength to continue my mission. Many thanks.

I took note of some of the words from the two testimonies, and also of their gestures, after they gave them.

One thing that Robert said is that, as human beings, we do not differentiate ourselves from the world's greats. We have our passions and our dreams, which we seek to carry forward in small steps. Passion and dreams: two words which can help. Passion which, at times, makes us suffer, which tends to ensnare us, interiorly and externally; the passion of sickness... thousands of passions. However, there is also the thrill of moving forward, a good passion, and this good passion leads us to dream.

For me, man or woman is very poor — but with a different poverty than yours — when this man or woman loses the ability to dream, loses the ability to bring forward a passion. Do not stop dreaming! The dream of a poor person, of one who does not have shelter, what could it be? I don't know, yet you dream. And you dreamt that one day you would be able to come to Rome, and then

this was achieved. You dream that the world can change, and this is a seed which is born in your hearts.

One of those who spoke at the beginning — Etienne Billemaine — recalled one of my words, which I use often: that poverty is at the heart of the Gospel. Only those who feel they are lacking something look up and dream; those who have everything cannot dream! The people, the simple ones, followed Jesus because they dreamt that he would have the cure, that he would free them, that he would do something good for them, and they followed him and he freed them.

Men and women with passions and dreams. And this is the first thing I wanted to tell you. You teach all of us who have a roof overhead, since we do not lack in food or medicine, you teach us not to be satisfied. With your dreams, you teach us to dream from the Gospel, where you are, from the heart of the Gospel.

A second word, which was not spoken, but which was in the attitude of those who spoke as well as in yours, and which came to my heart when Robert said in his language [French]: “And life becomes so beautiful!”. What does this mean? That life becomes beautiful for us, when we succeed, when we find beauty even in the worst situations in which you live. This is what dignity means, this is the word which comes to me. The ability to find beauty, even in the saddest and most painful things, can be had only by a man or woman who has dignity. Poor yes, miserable no! This is dignity. The same dignity had by Jesus, who was born poor, who lived in poverty; the same dignity which the Word of the Gospel has; the same dignity had by a man or woman who lives of their work. Poor yes, dominated no! Exploited no!

I know that very often you have met people who wanted to exploit your poverty, who wanted to use it; however, I also know that this sentiment of seeing that life is beautiful, this sentiment, this dignity, has saved you from becoming slaves. Poor yes, slaves no! Poverty is at the heart of the Gospel, to be lived. Slavery is not there in the Gospel to be lived, but to be liberated!

I know that for each one of you — as Robert said — life, at times, often, is very difficult. He said in his language [in French]: “Life has been much more difficult for many others than for me”.... We see that life has been more difficult for many others than for me; we always find someone poorer than us. And even this gives dignity; knowing how to be compassionate, knowing how to help, knowing how to give a hand to those who suffer more than myself. The ability to be compassionate is one of the fruits which poverty gives us. When there is great wealth, we forget to be compassionate, since we are used to the fact that we are not lacking in anything! When poverty, at times, causes you to suffer, it makes you compassionate, and makes you reach out your hand to those living in more difficult situations than yours. Thank you for this example which you give. Teach the world compassion!

I was struck by the persistence of Christian’s use of the word “peace”. There is a phrase which

speaks of his interior peace [in French]: “I found the peace of Christ whom I sought”. This is the first time that it was mentioned. And then he spoke of the peace and joy which he experienced when he started taking part in the Nantes choir. And, at the end, he made an appeal to me. He told me [in French]: “You who know the problem of peace in the world, I ask you to continue your actions in support of peace”. The greatest poverty is war. It is the poverty which destroys. And hearing this from the lips of a man who has suffered material poverty, from poor health, it is an appeal to work towards peace. Peace which, for us Christians, began in a stable with a marginalized family; the peace which God wants for each of his children. And, starting from your poverty, your situation, you can be builders of peace. Wars are fought among the rich, in order to have more, to possess more territory, more power, more money.... It is very sad when war is waged among the poor, because it is a rare thing: the poor are, because of their poverty, more inclined to be artisans of peace. Make peace! Create peace! Give examples of peace! We need peace in the world. We need peace in the Church; all of the Churches need peace; all religions need to grow in peace, because all religions are messengers of peace, but they must grow in peace. Help them, each of you within your own religion. That peace which comes from suffering, from the heart, is searching for that harmony which gives you dignity.

I thank you all for coming to visit me. I thank you for your testimonies. And I ask your forgiveness if I have at times offended you with my words, or if I have not said the things that I needed to say. I apologize on behalf of the Christians who do not read the Gospel and do not find poverty at the centre. I ask your forgiveness for all the times that we Christians, standing before a person who is poor or in a situation of poverty, have looked the other way. I am sorry.

Your forgiveness of the men and women of the Church who do not want to look at you, or who have not wanted to look at you, is Holy Water for us; it is cleansing for us; it helps us return to believing that — at the heart of the Gospel there is poverty as its great message, and that we Catholics, Christians, everyone — must form a poor Church for the poor; that every man and woman from every religion must see in every poor person the message of God who draws near and who becomes poor in order to accompany us in life.

May God bless each one of you. I want to say a prayer for you, now. Remain seated, as you are, and I will say the prayer.

God, Father of us all, of each of your children, I ask that you give us strength, give us joy, teach us, that you teach us to dream, to look forward, that you teach us to be compassionate because we are brothers and sisters, and that you help us defend our dignity.

You are the Father of each one of us. Bless us, O Father. Amen.

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