



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II TO YOUNG NEAPOLITAN STUDENTS

24 March 1979

You have come in large numbers, full of life and joy, to find the Pope, And the Pope receives you with deep cordiality and sincere friendship, because he knows that you young people are the precious seed which will give its fruit tomorrow in the Church and in society; he knows that you are the future, and that the destiny of mankind is in your hands and in your hearts.

The Pope wishes, therefore, that now and always you will be the good grain among the weeds, which—as the Gospel warns with wise realism—will continue, unfortunately, to grow in the field of history. Expressing to you, therefore, my gratitude for this visit of yours, such a fine and welcome one, I am happy to address you with a word of the Apostle Peter. May it remain in your hearts as a memory and an order: "Be firm in your faith" (1 Pt 5:9).

1. Be so in the first place by means of thorough and gradual knowledge of the content of Christian doctrine. It is not enough to be Christians because of the Baptism received or because of the historico-social conditions in which you are born and live. As you grow in years and culture, new problems and new requirements of clarity and certainty come into consciousness. It is then necessary to set out in a responsible way in search of the motivations of your own Christian faith. If you do not become personally aware and do not have an adequate understanding of what must be believed and of the reasons for this faith, at a certain moment everything may inevitably collapse and be swept away, in spite of the good will of parents and educators.

Therefore, today is specially the time for study, meditation, and reflection. I say to you therefore: use your intelligence well, make an effort to reach correct and personal convictions, do not waste time, deepen the motives and foundations of faith in Christ and in the Church, so as to be firm now and in your future.

2. One is firm in the faith, furthermore, by means of prayer.

St Paul already recommended: "Pray constantly" (1 Thes 5:17). It is possible, in fact, to know Holy Scripture perfectly, it is possible to be learned in philosophy and in theology, yet not have faith, or fail in faith; because it is always God who calls first to know him and love him in the right way. It is necessary, therefore, to be humble before the Almighty.

It is necessary to maintain the sense of mystery, because there always remains the infinite between God and man. It is necessary to remember that before God and his Revelation it is not so much a question of understanding with one's 'own limited reason, but rather of loving.

For this reason Jesus said, "I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to babes; yea, Father, for such was thy gracious will" (Mt 11:25-26).

This, beloved young people, is the thought that the Pope entrusts to you this morning: may it be a guide and a support in your generous commitment. With my Apostolic Blessing.

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