

Bring Forth Hope

Pope Francis Speaks
to the Youth of the World

Christopher Ryan MGL



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dedication

For Ella, Grace, James, Bonnie, Sarah, Paris,
Allanah, and Isaac

introduce

It was an extraordinary moment, the evening of March 13, 2013! Thousands of people flooded Saint Peter's Square at the Vatican as the news spread that white smoke had been spotted from the chimney above the Sistine Chapel. A new pope had been elected! An extraordinary cheer erupted as Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio, now Pope Francis, emerged from behind the curtain to greet the people gathered below, and to greet the world.

The square went silent as the Holy Father prepared to speak. In fact, the watching world seemed to be holding its breath, waiting to hear the first words of the new Pope. With a somewhat shy smile, Francis began, "Brothers and sisters, good evening," and the crowd erupted again. From that simple greeting, Pope Francis began an extraordinary conversation, a dialogue with the world.

In many ways, it has been an unusual conversation, at least for a Pope. Pope Francis has foregone much of the usual formalities tra-

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ditionally associated with the papacy. He regularly gives “off the cuff” homilies rather than speaking at length from prepared texts. When he does have a prepared text, he frequently departs from it or abandons it altogether to speak from the heart and address the real-life issues he encounters among the people gathered. In these conversations, he reveals himself as a humble man of God who desires only one thing: that all people of good will come to know the love and friendship of Jesus.

The Pope’s choice of name is significant. By recalling the great Saint Francis of Assisi, the Holy Father has chosen to give witness to a Church that turns outward, especially to the poor, the suffering, and those alienated in any way. He is a simple man. After becoming Pope, he rang up his newsagent in Buenos Aires to cancel his paper delivery for himself. He personally called a woman who found herself unexpectedly pregnant and abandoned by the father of the child. In the course of the phone

conversation, Pope Francis offered to baptize the baby. When journalist and nonbeliever Eugenio Scalfari wrote two editorials posing questions that he would like to ask the Pope, Pope Francis replied with a personal letter that was published in the newspaper; he didn't have someone else reply on his behalf. It is clear that Pope Francis wants to listen to people personally and then respond directly to them. He especially wants to connect with those who are on the edge of the Church, with those who don't believe, and with those who are hurting in some way.

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Pope Francis particularly wants to speak with and listen to the young people of the world. In fact, he has done so on several occasions already. Without doubt, the most memorable conversations with young people so far took place at World Youth Day in Rio de Janeiro in July 2013. In a very real sense, Pope Francis's addresses at World Youth Day express the most important things he wants to say to the youth of the world. However, his pilgrimage to Rio is not the only time Francis has engaged in an explicit dialogue with young people. He has frequently taken other opportunities to speak with young people in homilies, in question-and-answer sessions, and in his weekly general audiences and Angelus addresses. Young people are dear to the heart of the Holy Father!

In this collection of fifty-two quotes of the Holy Father, you have the opportunity to

explore themes that are central to Pope Francis's vision of what it means to be a Christian. Above all else, the Holy Father wants young people to encounter Jesus Christ. He wants you to experience the love that God has for you. He wants you to know that you have been forgiven through the death of Jesus, and he wants you to know the joy that comes from the discovery that Jesus is risen from the dead! Pope Francis also challenges you to live a life that matters. He wants you to generously serve others, especially the poor. He wants you to be at the forefront of a Church that is going out to care for those who are hurting, forgotten, marginalized. The Holy Father wants to inspire and encourage you. He believes you are capable of great things for God and for others!

The book you are now holding in your hands continues the conversation the Pope has begun with the youth of the world. You might like to think of it as Francis's personal conversation with you. There are fifty-two reflections, one for each week of the year. Each reflection begins with a short quote from the Holy Father to young people.

Think About That

After each quote from the Holy Father, you are invited to reflect further on his words in the "Think About That" section. In a way, this section invites you to listen deeply to Pope Francis and to take his words to heart. The Holy Father

often urges us to “listen for the answer in the silence of our own heart.” This is where the Spirit is at work—in the silence of our reflective heart.

Take Action

The last thing Pope Francis would want is for you to merely listen to his words and not put your faith into action. In the “Take Action” section, you will find a suggested action that may invite you to pray, to write down your reflections and responses, or to read a passage of Scripture. You will also be invited to do something practical and concrete for others, because we are all called to love others as we have been loved by Jesus. In this way, Pope Francis asks you to express your love for God in deeds and not just words.

Say a Prayer

Pope Francis’s conversation with you is intended to be the launching pad for a conversation with the Lord Jesus. The Holy Father wants you to pray, to enter into a dialogue with God. You can use the prayer that has been provided each day of the week as the springboard for your personal conversation with God. The line from Scripture at the top of each reflection can also help lead you into prayer. I invite you also to turn to Scripture each week and read the Word of God as a source that feeds your spiritual life.

A simple refrain runs through these reflections from Pope Francis: the Holy Father calls you to “put on faith,” to “put on hope,” and to “put on love.” In a characteristically earthy image, Pope Francis explains that “putting on faith” is like adding salt or oil to a plate of food. The salt or oil does not remain on the surface of the food but rather changes the flavor of the whole meal. In the same way, when you “put on faith, hope, and love,” when you “put on Christ,” your whole life is changed.

May you enjoy this conversation with Pope Francis, and may his words lead you to a life-changing encounter with Jesus Christ!

Fr. Chris Ryan MGL

You will show me the path to life, / abounding joy
in your presence.

—Ps 16:11

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“ Put on faith, and life will take on a
new flavor, life will have a compass
to show you the way.”

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—Pope Francis, World Youth Day 2013,
welcoming ceremony

Think About That

The Holy Father offers two striking images to tell us about the difference faith makes in our life. Like salt, faith gives flavor to every part of life. Every aspect of our life is richer, fuller, and deeper in friendship with Jesus Christ. Like a compass that indicates the right way for a traveler, faith also provides direction to our life. When we have faith, we can trust in a path for



our life. Through these images, the Holy Father is saying that faith changes everything. It makes the ultimate difference in our life.

Take Action

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It might sound obvious, but have you ever asked God for faith? Take some time in silence to write a prayer in your journal asking the Lord for the kind of faith that “flavors” every part of your life and gives you a sense of purpose and direction.

Say a Prayer

Lord Jesus, increase my faith! I want my faith in you to bring meaning and fulfillment to my life. I want my faith in you to flavor every part of my life. Friendship with you changes everything.

My sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me.

—Jn 10:27

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“ Listen to what [the Lord] is saying to you in your heart.”

12

—Pope Francis, World Youth Day 2013, vigil

Think About That

Our heart is the special place where the Lord dwells and speaks to us personally, where the Lord speaks to the deepest part of us. When we take the time to be silent and listen to the Lord in our heart, we discover that he has the words we really need.



Take Action

It is not always easy to listen to Jesus, because our mind and heart are often so noisy. Try to find some time each day this week to be silent so that you can hear the Lord speaking to you. Simply sit in silence and listen for what Jesus may have to speak to you.

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Say a Prayer

Speak, Lord, your servant is listening. Help me hear what you are saying to me in the depths of my heart, and give me the courage to do what you ask.

I have told you this so that my joy might be in you
and your joy might be complete.

—Jn 15:11

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14 “ If we are truly in love with Christ
and if we sense how much he loves
us, our heart will ‘light up’ with a joy
that spreads to everyone around us.”

—Pope Francis, World Youth Day 2013,
homily at Aparecida, Brazil

Think About That

Joy is the greatest sign that a person has met Jesus and fallen in love with him. It is the happiness that comes from knowing that we are loved by God, that we are loved personally, deeply, and intimately. The Holy Father has shared with us this secret of true joy: It is the result of knowing that Jesus loves us. Pope



Francis also says that this joy will spread naturally to those around us.

Take Action

This week, find the person in your class or at your workplace who is the most sad or lonely. Share your lunch with him or her. Just enjoy this person's company, and let him or her enjoy yours. Notice how this simple action can "light up" your heart and the heart of another.

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Say a Prayer

Lord, I want my heart to "light up" with the joy of knowing that you love me, and that I love you. I want to spread your joy, especially to those who most need to know your love for them. Today I pray for those people I know who are sad and lonely. Make me a minister of your joy to them.

You take note of misery and sorrow; / you take the
matter in hand. / To you the helpless can entrust
their cause; / you are the defender of orphans.

—Ps 10:14

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“ We must never allow the throwaway
culture to enter our hearts, because
we are brothers and sisters. No one
is disposable!”

—Pope Francis, World Youth Day 2013,
address to the community of Varginha, Brazil

Think About That

Pope Francis is helping us to see that there are two fundamental ways of looking at another person: as a brother or sister, or as an object or thing. The second way involves a profound rejection of the dignity and worth of every human being. “No one is disposable!” This means everyone matters.



Take Action

Some individuals or groups do believe that others are disposable. They often want to eliminate the most vulnerable members of our society, such as the elderly, migrants or refugees, unborn babies, or those with a physical or intellectual disability. Take some time this week to visit someone who is homebound or sick, or someone who has recently arrived in our country.

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Say a Prayer

Father, all of us are made in your image and likeness. We are all your children, so we are all brothers and sisters. Thank you for the dignity and worth of every human being. Help me see everyone I meet this week as my brother and sister.

Be merciful, just as [also] your Father is merciful.

—Lk 6:36

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“ The Cross of Christ invites us . . .
to look upon others with mercy and
tenderness, especially those who
suffer.”

18

—Pope Francis, World Youth Day 2013,
Stations of the Cross

Think About That

People sometimes mock tenderness and mercy when they see it. They regard these qualities as signs of weakness. In fact, there is nothing stronger than tenderness and mercy. They are beautiful gifts that we can offer to others, especially those who are suffering in some way. Pope Francis is inviting us to be merciful and tender to those who are suffering.



Take Action

Who is someone you know who is suffering in some way in this moment? What is the source of her or his suffering? What is one merciful word or tender action you can say or do for this person this week? Look to Jesus for the courage now to move beyond just thinking about saying or doing something—go to the person now and show her or him your mercy and tenderness.

Say a Prayer

Lord, you are tender and merciful to me. May others discover your mercy and tender love through me every day this week. Give me the courage to bring mercy and tenderness to another's suffering wherever I encounter it this week.

Your word is a lamp for my feet, / a light for my path.

—Ps 119:105

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“ Dear young people: ‘Put on Christ’ in your lives. . . . Christ awaits you in his Word; listen carefully to him.”

—Pope Francis, World Youth Day 2013, welcoming ceremony

Think About That

The Bible is God’s Word to us. It is a vital way to listen to him carefully. This means we can encounter Jesus when we prayerfully read the Scriptures, especially the Gospels. When Christ speaks to someone in the Gospels, he is also



speaking to us, to all people willing to listen, as Pope Francis says, “with the heart.”

Take Action

Spend 10 minutes each day this week reading the Gospel of Mark in the Bible. When you read a passage, ask Jesus what he is trying to tell you about himself and his love for you and listen for the answer in your heart. See if you can make daily Scripture reading a habit in your life.

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Say a Prayer

Lord Jesus, I want to know you more. I want to encounter you in your Word. I believe that you have the words of eternal life; help me listen.