

## CHAPTER TWO

### Jesus, ever young

23. It is important to realize that Jesus was a young person. He gave his life when he was, in today's terms, a young adult.

38. Those of us who are no longer young need to find ways of keeping close to the voices and concerns of young people. "Drawing together creates the conditions for the Church to become a place of dialogue and a witness to life-giving fraternity". We need to make more room for the voices of young people to be heard: "listening makes possible an exchange of gifts in a context of empathy.

41. Although many young people are happy to see a Church that is humble yet confident in her gifts and capable of offering fair and fraternal criticism, others want a Church that listens more, that does more than simply condemn the world. They do not want to see a Church that is silent and afraid to speak, but neither one that is always battling obsessively over two or three issues. To be credible to young people, there are times when she needs to regain her humility and simply listen, recognizing that what others have to say can provide some light to help her better understand the Gospel. A Church always on the defensive, which loses her humility and stops listening to others, which leaves no room for questions, loses her youth and turns into a museum. How, then, will she be able to respond to the dreams of young people?

44. "We are always struck by the strength of the young Mary's "yes", the strength in those words, "be it done", that she spoke to the angel. This was no merely passive or resigned acceptance, or a faint "yes", as if to say, "Well, let's give it a try and see what happens". Mary did not know those words, "Let's see what happens". She was determined; she knew what was at stake and she said "yes" without thinking twice. Hers was the "yes" of someone prepared to be committed, someone willing to take a risk, ready to stake everything she had, with no more security than the certainty of knowing that she was the bearer of a promise. So I ask each one of you: do you see yourselves as the bearers of a promise?

## CHAPTER THREE

### You are the "now" of God

65. The Synod recognized that the members of the Church do not always take the approach of Jesus. Rather than listening to young people attentively, "all too often, there is a tendency to provide prepackaged answers and ready-made solutions, without allowing their real questions to emerge and facing the challenges they pose". Yet once the Church sets aside narrow preconceptions and listens carefully to the young, this empathy enriches her, for "it allows young people to make their own contribution to the community, helping it to appreciate new sensitivities and to consider new questions".

66. We adults can often be tempted to list all the problems and failings of today's young people. Perhaps some will find it praiseworthy that we seem so expert in discerning difficulties and dangers. But what would be the result of such an attitude?

## CHAPTER FOUR

A great message for all young people

112. The very first truth I would tell each of you is this: “God loves you”. It makes no difference whether you have already heard it or not. I want to remind you of it. God loves you. Never doubt this, whatever may happen to you in life. At every moment, you are infinitely loved.

## CHAPTER FIVE

Paths of youth

142. Keep following your hopes and dreams. But be careful about one temptation that can hold us back. It is anxiety. Anxiety can work against us by making us give up whenever we do not see instant results. Our best dreams are only attained through hope, patience and commitment, and not in haste. At the same time, we should not be hesitant, afraid to take chances or make mistakes. Avoid the paralysis of the living dead, who have no life because they are afraid to take risks, to make mistakes or to persevere in their commitments. Even if you make mistakes, you can always get up and start over, for no one has the right to rob you of hope.

143. Dear young people, make the most of these years of your youth. Don't observe life from a balcony. Don't confuse happiness with an armchair, or live your life behind a screen. Whatever you do, do not become the sorry sight of an abandoned vehicle! Don't be parked cars, but dream freely and make good decisions. Take risks, even if it means making mistakes. Don't go through life anesthetized or approach the world like tourists. Make a ruckus! Cast out the fears that paralyze you, so that you don't become young mummies. Live! Give yourselves over to the best of life! Open the door of the cage, go out and fly! Please, don't take an early retirement.

162. But I would also remind you that you won't become holy and find fulfilment by copying others. Imitating the Saints does not mean copying their lifestyle and their way of living holiness: “there are some testimonies that may prove helpful and inspiring, but that we are not meant to copy, for that could even lead us astray from the one specific path that the Lord has in mind for us”. You have to discover who you are and develop your own way of being holy, whatever others may say or think. Becoming a saint means becoming more fully yourself, becoming what the Lord wished to dream and create, and not a photocopy.

177. “Where does Jesus send us? There are no borders, no limits: he sends us everywhere. The Gospel is for everyone, not just for some. It is not only for those who seem closer to us, more receptive, more welcoming. It is for everyone. Do not be afraid to go and bring Christ into every area of life, to the fringes of society, even to those who seem farthest away and most indifferent. The Lord seeks all; he wants everyone to feel the warmth of his mercy and his love”. He invites us to be fearless missionaries wherever we are and in whatever company we find ourselves: in our neighborhoods, in school or sports or social life, in volunteer service or in the workplace. Wherever we are, we always have an opportunity to share the joy of the Gospel.

## CHAPTER SIX

### Young people with roots

191. The world has never benefitted, nor will it ever benefit, from a rupture between generations. That is the siren song of a future without roots and origins. It is the lie that would have you believe that only what is new is good and beautiful. When intergenerational relationships exist, a collective memory is present in communities, as each generation takes up the teachings of its predecessors and in turn bequeaths a legacy to its successors.

193. The elderly have dreams built up of memories and images that bear the mark of their long experience. If young people sink roots in those dreams, they can peer into the future; they can have visions that broaden their horizons and show them new paths. But if the elderly do not dream, young people lose clear sight of the horizon.

195. That is why it is a good thing to let older people to tell their long stories, which sometimes seem legendary or fanciful – they are the dreams of old people – yet are often full of rich experiences, of eloquent symbols, of hidden messages. These stories take time to tell, and we should be prepared to listen patiently and let them sink in, even though they are much longer than what we are used to in the social media.

197. What can we elderly persons give to the young? “We can remind today’s young people, who have their own blend of heroic ambitions and insecurities, that a life without love is an arid life”. What can we tell them? “We can tell fearful young people say that anxiety about the future can be overcome”. What can we teach them? “We can teach those young people, sometimes so focused on themselves, that there is more joy in giving than in receiving, and that love is not only shown in words, but also in actions”.

199. If we journey together, young and old, we can be firmly rooted in the present, and from here, revisit the past and look to the future. To revisit the past in order to learn from history and heal old wounds that at times still trouble us. To look to the future in order to nourish our enthusiasm, cause dreams to emerge, awaken prophecies and enable hope to blossom. Together, we can learn from one another, warm hearts, inspire minds with the light of the Gospel, and lend new strength to our hands.

200. Roots are not anchors chaining us to past times and preventing us from facing the present and creating something new. Instead, they are a fixed point from which we can grow and meet new challenges. It does us no good “to sit down and long for times past; we must meet our culture with realism and love and fill it with the Gospel. We are sent today to proclaim the Good News of Jesus to a new age.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### Youth Ministry

211. In this outreach, we need to use above all the language of closeness, the language of generous, relational and existential love that touches the heart, impacts life, and awakens hope and desires. Young people need to be approached with the grammar of love, not by being preached at. The language that young people understand is spoken by those who radiate life, by those who are there for them and with them. And those who, for all their limitations and weaknesses, try to live their faith with integrity.

224. Many young people have come to appreciate silence and closeness to God. Groups that gather to adore the Blessed Sacrament or to pray with the word of God have also increased. We should never underestimate the ability of young people to be open to contemplative prayer. We need only find the right ways and means to help them embark on this precious experience. When it comes to worship and prayer, “in many settings, young Catholics are asking for prayer opportunities and sacramental celebrations capable of speaking to their daily lives through a fresh, authentic and joyful liturgy”. It is important to make the most of the great moments of the liturgical year, particularly Holy Week, Pentecost and Christmas. But other festive occasions can provide a welcome break in their routine and help them experience the joy of faith.

225. Christian service represents a unique opportunity for growth and openness to God’s gifts of faith and charity. Many young people are attracted by the possibility of helping others, especially children and the poor. Often this service is the first step to a discovery or rediscovery of life in Christ and the Church. Many young people grow weary of our programs of doctrinal and spiritual formation, and at times demand a chance to be active participants in activities that benefit others.

227. “Equally significant is the emphasis that young people place on sports; the Church should not underestimate the potential of sports for education and formation, but instead maintain a strong presence there. The world of sport needs to be helped to overcome some of its problematic aspects, such as the idolization of champions, subservience to commercial interests and the ideology of success at any cost”. At the heart of the experience of sport is “joy: the joy of exercising, of being together, of being alive and rejoicing in the gifts the Creator gives us each day”.

238. Various manifestations of popular piety, especially pilgrimages, attract young people who do not readily feel at home in ecclesial structures, and represent a concrete sign of their trust in God. These ways of seeking God are seen particularly in young people who are poor, but also those in other sectors of society. They should not be looked down on, but encouraged and promoted. Popular piety “is a legitimate way of living the faith” and “an expression of the spontaneous missionary activity of the People of God”.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### Vocation

255. Your own personal vocation does not consist only in the work you do, though that is an expression of it. Your vocation is something more: it is a path guiding your many efforts and actions towards service to others. So in discerning your vocation, it is important to determine if you see in yourself the abilities needed to perform that specific service to society.

256. This gives greater value to everything you do. Your work stops being just about making money, keeping busy or pleasing others. It becomes your vocation because you are called to it; it is something more than merely a pragmatic decision. In the end, it is a recognition of why I was made, why I am here on earth, and what the Lord's plan is for my life. He will not show me every place, time and detail, since I will have to make my own prudent decisions about these. But he will show me a direction in life, for he is my Creator and I need to listen to his voice, so that, like clay in the hands of a potter, I can let myself be shaped and guided by him. Then I will become what I was meant to be, faithful to my own reality.

257. To respond to our vocation, we need to foster and develop all that we are. This has nothing to do with inventing ourselves or creating ourselves out of nothing. It has to do with finding our true selves in the light of God and letting our lives flourish and bear fruit. "In God's plan, every man and woman is meant to seek self-fulfillment, for every human life is called to some task by God".[140] Your vocation inspires you to bring out the best in yourself for the glory of God and the good of others. It is not simply a matter of doing things, but of doing them with meaning and direction

263. It is true that the difficulties they experience in their own family can lead many young people to ask whether it is worthwhile to start a new family, to be faithful, to be generous. I can tell you that it certainly is. It is worth your every effort to invest in the family; there you will find the best incentives to mature and the greatest joys to experience and share. Don't let yourselves be robbed of a great love. Don't let yourselves be led astray by those who propose a life of rampant individualism that in the end leads to isolation and the worst sort of loneliness.

274. If we are indeed convinced that the Holy Spirit continues to inspire vocations to the priesthood and the religious life, we can "once more cast out the nets" in the Lord's name, with complete confidence. We can dare, as we should, to tell each young person to ask whether this is the path that they are meant to follow.

276. In discerning your vocation, do not dismiss the possibility of devoting yourself to God in the priesthood, the religious life or in other forms of consecration. Why not? You can be sure that, if you do recognize and follow a call from God, there you will find complete fulfilment.

## CHAPTER NINE

### Discernment

283. A particular form of discernment involves the effort to discover our own vocation. Since this is a very personal decision that others cannot make for us, it requires a certain degree of solitude and silence. "The Lord speaks to us in a variety of ways, at work, through others and at every moment. Yet we simply cannot do without the silence of prolonged prayer, which enables us better to perceive God's language, to interpret the real meaning of the inspirations we believe we have received, to calm our anxieties and to see the whole of our existence afresh in his own light".

285. When seeking to discern our own vocation, there are certain questions we ought to ask. We should not start with wondering where we could make more money or achieve greater recognition and social status. Nor even by asking what kind of work would be most pleasing to us. If we are not to go astray, we need a different starting point. We need to ask: Do I know myself, quite apart from my illusions and emotions? Do I know what brings joy or sorrow to my heart? What are my strengths and weaknesses? These questions immediately give rise to others: How can I serve people better and prove most helpful to our world and to the Church? What is my real place in this world? What can I offer to society? Even more realistic questions then follow: Do I have the abilities needed to offer this kind of service? Could I develop those abilities?

286. These questions should be centered less on ourselves and our own inclinations, but on others, so that our discernment leads us to see our life in relation to their lives. That is why I would remind you of the most important question of all. "So often in life, we waste time asking ourselves: 'Who am I?' You can keep asking, 'Who am I?' for the rest of your lives. But the real question is: 'For whom am I?'" . Of course, you are for God. But he has decided that you should also be for others, and he has given you many qualities, inclinations, gifts and charisms that are not for you, but to share with those around you.

289. A vocation, while a gift, will undoubtedly also be demanding. God's gifts are interactive; to enjoy them we have to be ready to take risks. Yet the demands they make are not an obligation imposed from without, but an incentive to let that gift grow and develop, and then become a gift for others. When the Lord awakens a vocation, he thinks not only of what you already are, but of what you will one day be, in his company and in that of others.

291. There are many priests, men and women religious, lay and professional persons, and indeed qualified young people, who can help the young with their vocational discernment. When we are called upon to help others discern their path in life, what is uppermost is the ability to listen.

299. Dear young people, my joyful hope is to see you keep running the race before you, outstripping all those who are slow or fearful. Keep running, "attracted by the face of Christ, whom we love so much, whom we adore in the Holy Eucharist and acknowledge in the flesh of our suffering brothers and sisters. May the Holy Spirit urge you on as you run this race. The Church needs your momentum, your intuitions, your faith. We need them! And when you arrive where we have not yet reached, have the patience to wait for us".