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Apostolic Trip of His Holiness Francis to Romania (31 May to 2 June 2019) – Visit to Our Lady Queen of Iași Cathedral and Marian meeting with young people and families in the square of the Palace of Culture in Iași

Visit to Our Lady Queen of Iași Cathedral

Marian meeting with young people and families in the square of the Palace of Culture in Iași

Visit to Our Lady Queen of Iași Cathedral

In the afternoon, before leaving the Jakab Antal Ház Archdiocesan House, the Holy Father greeted a group of people with disabilities and some members of the Organizing Committee. He then transferred by helicopter to the airport of Târgu Mureș, from where he left for Iași.

Upon arrival at Iași International Airport, the Pope was received by H.E. Msgr. Petru Gherghel, bishop of Iași; the mayor of the city, Mr. Mihai Chirica; the president of the region, Mr. Maricel Popa; and the prefect Mr. Marian Șerbescu. He then transferred by car to the Cathedral of Our Lady Queen of Iași.

At the entrance to the Cathedral, the Holy Father was received by the auxiliary bishop, who gave the crucifix to him. The parish priest of the Cathedral, with a family, then brought him the holy water for aspersion. The Pope proceeded along the central nave, greeting the faithful present, and as he reached the altar a young deacon and an elderly priest gave him a candle which he placed before the relics of the Blessed Martyr Anton Durcovici. The Holy Father then paused in silent prayer. After the prayer, the Pope greeted those present, imparted his blessing and left by the central nave of the Cathedral.

Before getting into the popemobile to transfer to the Palace of Culture for the Marian meeting with young people and families, Pope Francis silently blessed a marble statue of Christ the Redeemer and a stone marking the *Camino de Santiago de Compostela* in Romania.

The following is the Pope's greeting to the faithful present in the Cathedral of Our Lady of Iași:

Greeting of the Holy Father

I would like to give you all my blessing, with my gratitude for being here.

Thank you for coming! Thank you because you stay with your sick; and thank you to those who persevere with illness, offering it to the Lord.

Now let us pray together to Our Lady, before the blessing.

[Recitation of *Hail Mary*]

[*Blessing*]

Please, pray for me. Do not forget!

Marian meeting with young people and families in the square of the Palace of Culture in Iași

At 17.30 (16.30 in Rome) the Holy Father Francis presided at the Marian meeting with young people and families in the square in front of the Palace of Culture in Iași.

After a tour by popemobile among the approximately 100 thousand faithful gathered in the area of the square, the Pope was welcomed by four children in traditional dress, who gave him a floral tribute. He then took the stage accompanied by the children and headed for the icon of Our Lady of Cacica, taking the flowers as homage.

After the greeting from the bishop of Iași, H.E. Msgr. Petru Gherghel, followed by the exchange of gifts, the hymn of the Resurrection and the testimonies of a young person and a family, another hymn and a Bible reading, Pope Francis pronounced his address.

At the end of the meeting, after the act of entrustment of young people and families to the Virgin Mary and the final blessing, the Holy Father took leave of the bishop of Iași, the mayor, the prefect of the city and the president of the region. After a further tour among the faithful by popemobile, he transferred by car to Iași International Airport where, at 19.25 (18.25 in Rome) he departed on board a TAROM B737 to return to Bucharest.

Upon arrival, at 20.05 (19.05 in Rome), the Pope returned by car to the apostolic nunciature of Bucharest.

The following is the Holy Father's address pronounced during the Marian meeting with young people and families:

Address of the Holy Father

Dear Brothers and Sisters, *bună seara!*

Here with you, I feel the warmth of being at home and part of a family, surrounded by young and old alike. In your presence and looking out at you, it is easy to feel at home. The Pope feels at home here with you. Thank

you for your warm welcome and for your testimonies. Bishop Petru, good strong father that he is, included all of you in his introduction. And you, Eduard, confirmed this when you told us that this meeting was not simply for young people, or adults, but that you “wanted our parents and grandparents to be with us tonight”.

Today in Romania is Children’s Day. A round of applause for the children! The first thing I would like us to do is to pray for them, asking the Blessed Virgin to shelter them under her mantle. Jesus placed children in the midst of his Apostles; we too want to put them at the centre. We want to reaffirm our commitment to love them with the same love with which the Lord loves them, and to make every effort to ensure their right to a future. This is a beautiful legacy: to give children their right to a future.

I am happy to know that here in this Square we see the face of God’s family, which is made up of children, young people, married couples, consecrated men and women, elderly Romanians from different regions and traditions, and others from Moldova. There are also those who came from the other side of the river Prut and who speak Csángó, Polish and Russian. The Holy Spirit has called us here and he helps us discover the beauty of being together, of being able to meet to *journey together*. Each of you has his or her own language and traditions, but you are happy to be here with others, with the happiness shared by Elisabeta and Ioan – aren’t these two great! – and their eleven children. All of you are different, you come from different places, yet “today everyone is gathered, together, just as on every Sunday morning in the old days, when everyone went to Church together”. The happiness of parents seeing their children gathered around them. Surely, today there is joy in heaven at the sight of all these children who have wanted to be together.

This is the experience of a new Pentecost (as we heard in the reading), where the Spirit embraces our differences and gives us the strength to open up paths of hope by bringing out the best in each person. It is the same path taken by the Apostles two thousand years ago. Today we are called to take their place and encouraged to be sowers of good seed. We cannot wait for others to do this; it is up to us. We are responsible! It is up to us!

Journeying together is not easy, is it? It is a gift that we have to ask for. A work of art for us to create, a beautiful gift for us to hand on. But where do we start, in order to journey together?

I would like to take up a point made by our elderly couple, Elisabeta and Ioan. It is good to see when love sinks deep roots through sacrifice and commitment, through work and prayer. Love took root in the two of you and it has borne rich fruit. As the prophet Joel says, when young and old meet, the elderly are not afraid to dream (cf. 2:28 [3:1]). This was your dream: “We dream that they may build a future without forgetting where they came from. We dream that none of our people will forget their roots”. You look to the future and you open the door to it for your children, your grandchildren and your people by offering them the best lesson that you learned from your own journey: never forget where you come from. Wherever you go and whatever you do, don’t forget your roots. It is the same dream, the same advice that Saint Paul gave to Timothy: to keep alive the faith of his mother and grandmother (cf. 2 Tim 1:5-7). As you continue to grow in every way – stronger, older and even in importance – do not forget the most beautiful and worthwhile lesson you learned at home. It is the wisdom that comes from age. When you grow up, do not forget your mother and your grandmother, and the simple but robust faith that gave them the strength and tenacity to keep going and not to give up. It is a reason for you to give thanks and to ask for the generosity, courage and selflessness of a “home-grown” faith that is unobtrusive, yet slowly but surely builds up the Kingdom of God.

Certainly, a faith that does not show up on the stock exchange, or “sell”, may not appear, as Eduard reminded us, to “be of much use”. Faith, however, is a gift that keeps alive a profound and beautiful certainty: that we are God’s beloved children. God loves with a Father’s love. Every life, and every one of us, belongs to him. We belong as children, but also as grandchildren, spouses, grandparents, friends, neighbours; we belong as brothers and sisters. The Evil one divides, scatters, separates; he sows discord and distrust. He wants us to live “detached” from others and from ourselves. The Spirit, on the contrary, reminds us that we are not anonymous, abstract, faceless beings, without history or identity. We are not meant to be empty or superficial. There is a very strong spiritual network that unites us; one that “connects” and sustains us, and is stronger than any other type of connection. And this network is our roots: the realization that we belong to one another, that each of our lives

is anchored in the lives of others. “Young people flourish when they are truly loved”, Eduard said. We all flourish when we feel loved. Because love draws us out of ourselves and invites us to take root in the lives of others. It is like those beautiful words of your national poet, whose fond wish for your sweet Romania was that “your children might live only in fraternity, like the stars of the night” (M. EMINESCU, *What I Wish for You, Sweet Romania*). Eminescu was a great man; he grew, felt himself to be mature, but more than that: he felt fraternal, and for this reason wants Romania, all Romanians to be brothers and sisters, “like the stars of the night”. We belong to each other and our happiness is meant to make others happy. Everything else is nonsense.

To *journey together*, wherever you may be, never forget what you learned at home. Don’t forget your roots.

This reminds me of the prophecy of one of the holy hermits of these lands. One day, the monk Galaction Ilie of Sihăstria Monastery was walking among sheep grazing on a mountainside when he met a saintly hermit whom he knew. He asked him: “Tell me, Father, when will the world end?” And the venerable hermit, with a deep sigh, replied: “Father Galaction, do you want to know when the world will end? *When there are no more paths between neighbours!* That is, when there is no more Christian love and understanding between brothers and sisters, relatives, Christians and peoples! When persons lose all their love, then it will truly be the end of the world. *Because without love and without God, no one can live on the earth!*”

Life begins to wilt and droop, our hearts stop beating and wither, the elderly no longer dream and young people no longer prophesy when pathways between neighbours disappear... Because without love and without God, no one can live on the earth.

Eduard told us that, like many others in his town, he tried to practise the faith amid numerous challenges. Many indeed are the challenges that can discourage us and make us close in on ourselves. We cannot deny it or pretend that it isn’t the case. Difficulties exist and they are evident. But that cannot make us forget that faith itself offers us the greatest challenge of all: a challenge that, far from enclosing or isolating us, can bring out the best in us all. The Lord is the first to challenge us. He tells us that the worst comes when there are no more paths between neighbours, when we see more trenches than roads. The Lord is the one who gives us a song more powerful than all the siren songs that would paralyze us on our journey. And he always does it the same way: by singing a more beautiful and more attractive song.

The Lord gives us a vocation, a challenge to discover the talents and abilities we possess and to put them at the service of others. He asks us to use our freedom as a freedom to choose, to say yes to a loving plan, to a face, to a look. This is a much greater freedom than simply being able to consume and buy things. It is a vocation that sets us in motion, makes us fill in trenches and open up new avenues to remind us all that we are children and brothers and sisters to one another.

During the Middle Ages, pilgrims set out together from this historical and cultural capital of your country, following the Via Transilvana on the way to Santiago de Compostela. Today many students from various parts of the world live here. I remember the virtual meeting we had in March (with Scholas Occurrentes), where I learned that this year your city would be the national youth capital. Is it true? Is it true that this city, this year, is the national youth capital? [*The young people answer: “Yes!”*]. Long live young people! You have two great things here: a city historically known for openness and creativity – such as the way of Santiago; and a city that can host young people from various parts of the world as it now does. Two things that remind us of the potential and the great mission that you can carry out: to *open up paths for journeying together* and pursuing that prophetic vision of our grandparents: without love and without God, no one can live on the earth. Today, from this place, new paths can open up to the future, towards Europe and many other parts of the world. Young people, you are pilgrims of the twenty-first century, capable of imagining afresh the bonds that unite us.

This is less about generating great programmes or projects, than about allowing faith to grow, allowing the roots to bring us sap. As I mentioned to you at the beginning: faith is not transmitted only by words, but also by gestures, looks and caresses, like those of our mothers and grandmothers; with the flavour of those things we learned at home in a straightforward and simple way. Where there is hue and din, let us try to listen; where there is confusion, let us inspire harmony; where everything is uncertain and ambiguous, let us bring clarity. Where

there is exclusion, let us offer solidarity; in the midst of sensationalism and instant communication, let us be concerned about the integrity of others; where there is aggression, let us bring peace; where there is falsehood, let us bring truth. In everything, let us make it our concern to open up paths that enable a sense of belonging, of being children and brothers and sisters (cf. *Message for the 2018 World Day of Social Communications*). These last words that I said have the “music” of Francis of Assisi: do you know what Saint Francis of Assisi used to advise his brothers to do in order to hand on the faith? This is what he said: “Go, and preach the Gospel, and if necessary, also use words”. [*They applaud*]. This applause is for Saint Francis of Assisi!

I am finishing, I have just one more paragraph, but I do not want to neglect to tell you about an experience I had just as I was coming into the Square. There was an elderly lady, quite elderly, a grandmother. In her arms was a grandchild, about two months old, not more. As I passed by, she showed him to me. She smiled, and smiled with a knowing smile, as if she was saying to me: “Look, now I can dream!” I was very moved in that moment and I didn’t have the courage to go and bring her up here. That’s why I am telling you. Grandparents dream when their grandchildren go forward, and grandchildren have that courage when they take their roots from their grandparents.

Romania is the “garden of the Mother of God”, and in this meeting I have been able to realize why. Mary is a Mother who encourages her children’s dreams, who cherishes their hopes, who brings joy to their homes. She is a tender and true Mother who cares for us. You are that living, flourishing and hope-filled community that we can offer to our Mother. To her, to the Mother, let us consecrate the future of young people, the future of families and the Church. *Mulțumesc!* [Thank you!].
