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To the young people of Catholic Action: joy multiplies when it is shared

This morning in the Consistory Hall the Holy Father received in audience the young people of Catholic Action, who visited in order to wish him a happy Christmas, and whom he greeted with great affection, expressing his joy at meeting them in this joyful period. “At Christmas the announcement of the angel to the shepherds resounds: ‘Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord’. The birth of Jesus is announced as a great joy, originating from the discovery that God loves us and, through the birth of Jesus, made Himself close to us to save us. We are beloved by God. What a wonderful thing! When we are a little sad, when it seems that everything is going wrong, when a friend disappoints us – or rather, when we disappoint ourselves – let us think ‘God loves me’, ‘God never abandons me’. Yes ... our Father is always faithful to us and never ceases for a moment to love us, to follow our steps and even to chase after us when we stray a little. This is why in the heart of a Christian there is always joy”.

“And this joy multiplies when it is shared!” he exclaimed. “Joy received as a gift asks us to bear witness to it in all our relations ... everywhere. In this, you, members of Catholic Action, are helped by your formative path, that this year has the slogan ‘Surrounded by joy’ (in Italian, ‘CIRCONDATI DI GIOIA’). This metaphor of the circus is evocative; it suggests an experience of fraternity, of joy and of nomadic life. The image of the circus can help you to experience the Christian community and the group of which you form a part as missionary entities, which move from country to country, road to road, surrounding with joy those you meet every day. Proclaiming to all the love and tenderness of Jesus, you become apostles of the joy of the Gospel. And joy is contagious”.

Francis set some “homework” to the young people of Catholic Action: to share joy with their grandparents. “Speak often with your grandparents; they too have this contagious joy. Ask them many things, listen to them: they have the memory of history, the experience of life, and for this reason it will be a great gift that will help you on your path. They too need to listen to you, to understand your aspirations, your hopes. ... The elderly have the wisdom of life”.

“Your commitment to peace is also contagious”, he continued. “This year too, you wished to link the word ‘peace’ to the word ‘solidarity’, with an initiative in favour of your peers in a disadvantaged neighbourhood of Naples. It is a good gesture, which shows the style with which you want to proclaim the countenance of God, Who is love. May the Lord bless this project of goodness”.

The Pope went on to greet and wish a happy Christmas to those who accompanied the young people of Catholic Action: the educators, helpers and national heads, as well as their relatives and the entire association, which is dispersed throughout all Italian dioceses, and he asked them to pray for him. Before leaving he remembered a “grandfather” whom the Lord called to Him not long ago: Bishop Mansueto Bianchi, a general ecclesiastical assistant for Italian Catholic Action. “May he, from heaven, teach us how to speak with the elderly and to listen to them. He had a beautiful name: Mansueto [meek], a gentle man, a good man, a good ‘grandfather’. May he teach us! And I invite you to pray a Hail Mary for him”.

Francis concluded by asking the young people of Italian Catholic Action if they remembered their “homework”, to which they answered, “Speaking with grandparents and listening to them”. “And next year we will see”, he answered.
