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Apostolic Trip of His Holiness Francis to Thailand and Japan (19 to 26 November 2019) - Holy Mass with young people in the Cathedral of the Assumption in Bangkok

Holy Mass with young people in the Cathedral of the Assumption in Bangkok

Homily of the Holy Father

The Holy Father's concluding words of thanks

In the afternoon, after leaving Chulalongkorn University, the Holy Father Francis transferred to the Cathedral of the Assumption of Bangkok to celebrate Holy Mass with young people. Upon arrival after changing car, the Pope boarded an electric vehicle in order to tour among the young people present.

At 16.40 local time (10.40 in Rome), the Holy Father presided at the Eucharistic Celebration in memory of Saint Cecilia, virgin and martyr. After the proclamation of the Gospel, the Holy Father delivered his homily.

At the end of Holy Mass, before the final blessing, the Archbishop of Bangkok, His Eminence Cardinal Francis Kriengsak Kovithavanij, addressed a greeting to Pope Francis. Then, after addressing some words of thanks to the 10,000 faithful present, the Pope blessed 25 stones for the new Churches of Thailand and, before leaving the Cathedral, greeted some people employed by the Curia. He returned to the apostolic nunciature straight afterwards by car.

The following is the homily delivered by the Pope during the Eucharistic Celebration and his words of thanks to those present at the end of the Holy Mass:

Homily of the Holy Father

Let us go out to meet Christ the Lord, for he is coming!

The Gospel we have just heard invites us to set out, to look to the future in order to encounter the most beautiful thing that it can bring us: the definitive coming of Christ into our lives and into our world. Let us welcome him into our midst with immense joy and love, as only you young people can do! Even before we set out to seek him, we know that the Lord is seeking us; he comes out to meet us and calls us to make, create and shape a future. We set out joyfully, for we know he is waiting for us there.

The Lord knows that through you, young people, the future is coming into this land and the world, and he is counting on you to carry out your mission today (cf. *Christus Vivit*, 174). Just as God had a plan for the Chosen People, so he has a plan for each of you. He first dreamed of inviting all of us to a banquet that we have to prepare together, with him, as a community: the banquet of his kingdom, from which no one could remain excluded.

Today's Gospel speaks of ten young women called to look ahead and share in the Lord's banquet. The problem was that some of them were not prepared, not because they had fallen asleep, but because they lacked the oil they needed for their lamps, the inner fuel to keep the fire of love burning. They had great excitement and motivation; they wanted to take part in the feast to which the Master had invited them. But as time passed, they grew weary, lost their energy and enthusiasm, and they arrived too late. This parable is about what can happen to any Christian. Full of excitement and interest, we hear the Lord's call to be a part of his kingdom and share his joy with others. But often, as each of you is well aware, in the face of problems and obstacles like the suffering of our loved ones, or our own helplessness before apparently hopeless situations, unbelief and bitterness can take over and silently seep into our dreams, making our hearts grow cold, causing us to lose our joy and to arrive late.

So I would like to ask you three questions. Do you want to keep alive the fire that keeps you burning brightly amid darkness and difficulties? Do you want to be prepared to answer the Lord's call? Do you want to be ready to do his will?

How can you obtain the oil that will keep you moving forward, that impels you to seek the Lord in every situation?

You are heirs to a precious history of evangelization that has been handed down to you as a sacred treasure. This beautiful cathedral is a witness to your ancestors' faith in Jesus Christ. Their deeply rooted faithfulness led them to do good works, to build that other, even more beautiful temple, made up of living stones, in order to bring God's merciful love to all the people of their time. They were able to do this because they were convinced of what the prophet Hosea proclaimed in today's first reading: God had spoken to them tenderly; he had embraced them with steadfast love forever (cf. *Hos 2:14.19*).

Dear friends, in order that the fire of the Spirit will keep burning, so that you can keep your eyes bright and your hearts aflame, you need to be deeply rooted in the faith of your ancestors: your parents, grandparents and teachers. Not to be stuck in the past, but to learn to find the courage that can help us respond to ever new situations. They had to endure many trials and much suffering in their lives. Yet along the way, they discovered that the secret to a happy heart is the security we find when we are anchored, rooted in Jesus: in the life of Jesus, in his words, in his death and resurrection.

"I have sometimes seen young and beautiful trees, their branches reaching to the sky, pushing ever higher, and they seemed a song of hope. Later, following a storm, I would find them fallen and lifeless. They lacked deep roots. They spread their branches without being firmly planted, and so they fell as soon as nature unleashed her power. That is why it pains me to see young people sometimes being encouraged to build a future without roots, as if the world were just starting now. For "it is impossible to grow unless we have strong roots to support us and to keep us firmly grounded. Dear young friends, it is easy to drift off, when there is nothing to clutch onto, to hold onto" (*Christus Vivit*, 179).

Without this firm sense of *rootedness*, we can be swayed by the “voices” of this world that compete for our attention. Many of those voices are attractive and nicely packaged; at first they seem appealing and exciting, but in the long run they will leave you only empty, weary, alone and disenchanted (cf. *ibid.*, 277), and slowly extinguish that spark of life that the Lord once ignited in the heart of each of us.

Dear young people, you are a *new* generation, with new hopes, new dreams and new questions, and surely some doubts as well, yet firmly rooted in Christ. I urge you to maintain your joy and to look to the future with confidence. Rooted in Christ, view all things with the joy and confidence born of knowing that the Lord has sought us out, found us and loved us infinitely. Friendship cultivated with Jesus is the oil needed to light up your path in life and the path of all those around you: your friends and neighbors, your companions at school and work, including those who think completely unlike yourselves.

Let us go out to meet Christ the Lord, for he is coming! Do not be afraid of the future or allow yourselves to be intimidated. Rather, know that the Lord is waiting for you there, in that future, in order to prepare and celebrate the banquet of his kingdom.

The Holy Father's concluding words of thanks

At the conclusion of this celebration, I wish to thank all those who have made my visit to Thailand possible, and those who worked together to bring it to fruition.

I renew my gratitude to His Majesty King Rama X, the government and to the other authorities of the country, for their warm reception. I offer heartfelt thanks to my brother bishops and, in a particular way, to Cardinal Francis Xavier, as well as the priests, men and women religious, and lay faithful, and especially you young people.

My deep thanks go to the volunteers who worked together with such generosity, and to all who accompanied me with their prayers and sacrifices, especially the sick and those who are incarcerated.

May the Lord reward you with his consolation and the peace that he alone can give. I am leaving you with a task: do not forget to pray for me. Thank you!
