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Apostolic Journey of Pope Francis in Hungary (28 to 30 April 2023) – Meeting with young people at the Papp László Budapest Sportaréna

Meeting with young people at the Papp László Budapest Sportaréna

This afternoon, after leaving the Apostolic Nunciature, the Holy Father Francis transferred by car to the *Papp László Budapest Sportaréna* for the meeting with young people.

Upon arrival, after changing vehicle and after several tours in an electric car among the approximately 12,000 present, the Pope was received by the bishop in charge of youth pastoral care, Bishop Ferenc Palánki of Debrecen-Nyíregyháza, as a hymn was sung.

Then, after the greeting from the bishop, the performance of a traditional dance and the testimonies of four young people, Pope Francis delivered his address.

At the end of the meeting, after the recitation of the Lord's prayer, the blessing and the final hymn, the Holy Father returned by car to the Apostolic Nunciature of Budapest, where he received the mayor of Budapest, Mr. Gergely Szilveszter Karáksony, with his wife and children. The meeting, which took place in a family atmosphere, lasted around fifteen minutes.

Subsequently, in the Hall of the Pontifical Representation, the Pope met privately with the members of the Society of Jesus present in Hungary.

The following is the address delivered by the Pope to those present at the meeting:

Address of the Holy Father

Dicsértessék a Jézus Krisztus! [Praised be Jesus Christ!]

Dear brothers and sisters, I would like to say *köszönöm!* [thank you!] for your dance, your song and your courageous testimonies. I thank each of you for being here today: I am happy to be with you! Thank you.

Bishop Ferenc has told us that youth is a time for important questions and responses. That is true, and it is important that you have someone to encourage you and to listen to your questions, not to give you simplistic, pre-packaged answers, which are useless and cannot make us happy, but to help you fearlessly face the adventure of life as you search for the right answers. That is exactly what Jesus did. Bertalan, you said that Jesus is not a storybook character or the superhero of a comic book, and that is true. He is God in the flesh, the living God who draws near to us. Jesus is a friend, the best of friends. He is a brother, the best of brothers, and he is very good at asking questions. We read in the Gospels, that he, the Teacher, always asks questions before he responds. I think of the time he found himself faced with the woman caught in adultery, at whom all were pointing their fingers. Jesus speaks, and her accusers depart. He is left alone with her and he gently asks her: "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" (*Jn 8:10*). She answers, "No one, Lord" (v. 11). Even as she speaks, she realizes that God wishes not to condemn her, but to forgive her. Keep this in mind: God does not want to condemn, but to forgive. *God always forgives*. Don't forget it! God always forgives; he is always there to lift us up whenever we fall! With him at our side, we should never be afraid to move ahead with our lives. We can also think of Mary Magdalene – a woman who had quite a past! – who on Easter morning was the first to see the risen Jesus. As she stood weeping by the empty tomb, Jesus came and asked her: "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" (*Jn 20:15*). Hearing this question, Mary Magdalene opened her heart, unburdened her grief and revealed the deepest desires of her heart: "Where is the Lord?".

We can look too at Jesus' first encounter with those who were to become his disciples. Two of them, sent to him by John the Baptist, begin to follow Jesus. The Lord turns to them and asks a single question: "What are you looking for?" (*Jn 1:38*). I too ask each of you a question; answer it quietly in your hearts. My question is: "What is it that you seek? What are you looking for in life? What do you seek in your heart?" Silently, let each of us answer within ourselves. What do I seek? Jesus does not preach at them, but walks with them, and with each of us. Jesus walks closely by our side. He does not want his disciples to be like schoolchildren who merely repeat lessons learned, but young people who are free and press ahead, fellow travellers of a God who listens to their needs and is attentive to their dreams. Then, some time later, two of his young disciples blunder – his disciples often blunder! – and they ask Jesus the wrong thing, namely, to sit at his right and his left when he becomes king, because they wanted to climb higher. It is worth noting that Jesus does not rebuke them for their audacity. He does not say: "How dare you? Stop dreaming of such things!" No, Jesus does not shatter their ambitions, but corrects them about the right way to achieve them. He accepts their desire for greatness, which is good, but he insists on one thing that we too must always remember: it is not by stepping upon others that we become great, but by stooping to help them. We do not achieve greatness at the expense of others, but rather by serving them (cf. *Mk 10:35-45*). As you see, dear friends, Jesus wants us to accomplish great things. He doesn't want us to be lazy "couch potatoes"; he doesn't want us to be quiet and timid; instead, he wants us to be alive, active, ready to take charge and make history. He never disparages our expectations but, on the contrary, raises the bar of our desires. Jesus would agree with a proverb of yours, which I hope I pronounce well: *Aki mer az nyer* [Those who dare, win the prize].

You may well ask: how do we win in life? Just as in sports, there are two basic steps. First, aim high, then train. *Aim high*. Do you have a talent? Of course you do, everyone has! Don't put it aside, thinking that the bare minimum is enough to bring happiness: a degree, a job to earn money, to have fun... No! Put your talents to good use. Do you have a good quality? Invest in it, don't be afraid! Do you feel in your heart that you have the possibility of helping others? Do you sense how good it is to love the Lord, to have a large family, to help those in need? Then carry on, don't think that these are unattainable desires. Rather, invest in the great goals of life! This, then, is the first step, to aim high. The second is to *train*. How do you train? Through dialogue with Jesus, who is the best of coaches. He listens to you, encourages you, believes in you. Did you know that? Jesus believes in you and is able to bring out the best in you. He constantly invites you to be a team player, never alone but with others: this is very important. If you want to mature and grow in life, always be a team player, in the community, sharing your experiences with others. I think, for example, of the experience of the World Youth Days, so I will take this opportunity to invite you to the next one, to be held in Portugal, in Lisbon, at the beginning of August. Nowadays there is a great temptation to be satisfied with a cell phone and a few friends. What a pity! Even if many people are willing to settle for that, or even if you are too, it is not good or healthy. You

cannot shut yourselves away in small groups of friends, talking only on your cell phone. To do so – allow me to say it – is somewhat stupid.

There is one important element of training that you, Krisztina, reminded us of, when you said that nowadays, amid all our racing around, with so much hustle and bustle, there is something essential that young people, and adults as well, are lacking. You said, “We don’t make time for silence in the midst of this racket, because we are afraid of loneliness; as a result, every day we end up feeling tired.” Thank you for telling us this, Krisztina. What I would say to you is this: don’t be afraid to swim against the current, to make room for a moment of silence each day, a moment to stop and pray. Nowadays, we are bombarded with the message that we have to be fast, efficient and practically perfect, like machines – even though, dear friends, we are not machines! Then, we often find that we run out of gas and are at a loss for what to do. We have to learn how to stop and fill our tanks, to recharge our batteries. Here though, I would also say: be careful not to indulge in moodiness or brood over your troubles. Don’t waste time thinking about who did this or that to me, questioning other people’s motives. That is not good or healthy either; in fact it is poisonous, and best avoided.

Silence is the soil in which we cultivate good relationships. It allows us to entrust to Jesus whatever we are feeling, to bring him faces and names, to share our difficulties, to remember our friends and to say a prayer for them. Silence gives us a chance to read a page of the Gospel that can speak to our hearts, to worship God, to regain our inner peace. Silence allows us to pick up a book that we don’t have to read, but one that can help us learn how to read human hearts. Silence enables us to observe nature, so that we are not just in contact with appliances and devices, but discover the natural beauty that is all around us. Silence is not for sitting glued to your cell phone, or on social media. No, please! Life is real, not virtual. It does not take place on a screen, but in the world! Please do not “virtualize” life! I repeat: do not virtualize it, for life is concrete. Understood?

Silence, then, is the door to prayer, and prayer is the door to love. Dóra, I want to thank you because you told us something beautiful, from your own experience: that faith is a love story, where every day you deal with the problems of adolescence, but you know that there is always Someone at your side, Someone who is there for you, and that Someone is Jesus. He does not hesitate to help you overcome every obstacle on your path. Prayer helps you in this, because prayer is dialogue with Jesus, just as Mass is an encounter with him, and Confession is the embrace you receive from him. This reminds me of your great musician Franz Liszt. During the restoration of his piano, a few beads from his rosary were found; the rosary had broken and those beads had fallen into the instrument. This makes us realize that before a composition or performance, perhaps even after a moment of enjoyment at the piano, it was usual for him to pray. He spoke to the Lord and Our Lady about what he loved and he brought his art and talents to prayer. Praying is not boring! We are the ones who make it boring. Prayer is an encounter with the Lord, an encounter that is beautiful. So, when you pray, don’t be afraid to bring to Jesus everything that is going on in your life: your emotions and fears, your problems and expectations, your memories and hopes, everything, including your sins. Jesus understands it all. Prayer is a dialogue of life; prayer *is* life. Bertalan, today you were not ashamed to tell everyone about the anxiety that sometimes grips you and about your struggles with faith. What a beautiful thing it is to have this *courage of honesty*. Instead of having to act as if you are never afraid, you can freely share your vulnerability with the Lord and with others, without hiding or disguising anything, without wearing a mask. Thank you for your testimony, Bertalan. Thank you! On every page, the Gospel tells us that the Lord does not do great things with exceptional people, but with ordinary and weak people like ourselves. Those who count on their own abilities, and are anxious always to look good before others, keep God away from their hearts because they are only concerned about themselves. Jesus, by his questions and by his love, together with his Spirit, acts deep within us to make us real, authentic people. And today we have great need of such real and authentic people. Let me tell you something: do you know what the danger is today? Of being a fake person. Please, never be fake people, always be your real and truthful selves! “But, Father, I am ashamed because my real self is not good; you know, Father, I have certain things inside...” Look ahead, to the Lord, have courage! The Lord wants us the way we are, the way we are now, and he loves us the way we are. Take courage and move forwards! Do not be afraid of your poverty.

In this regard, I think we were all struck by what you said, Tódor, starting with your name, which honours Blessed Theodore, a great confessor of the faith who inspires us to not live by half measures. You wanted to issue a “wake-up call”, reminding us that our zeal for the mission can be blunted by living in security and comfort, while not far from here war and suffering are daily realities. This is the real challenge: to take control of

our lives in order to help our world to live in peace. Each one of us should ask the uncomfortable question: What am I doing for others, for society, what am I doing for the Church, or for my enemies? Do I think only about myself? Or do I put myself on the line for others, without calculating my own interests? Please, let us reflect on our ability to be generous, our ability to love, *to love as Jesus taught us*, which is by loving and serving others.

Dear friends, there is one last thing I would like to share with you. It is a page of the Gospel, which sums up everything that we have said. A year and a half ago, I was here for the Eucharistic Congress. In the sixth chapter of John's Gospel there is a beautiful eucharistic passage with a young person at the centre. He was part of the crowd listening to Jesus, and he had planned ahead: he brought his lunch with him. Jesus feels compassion for the crowd, more than five thousand people, and wants to feed them; so, again in his typical way, he asks the disciples questions to get them to act. He asks one of them how they could feed the crowd, and gets a "bookkeeper" response: "Six months' wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little" (Jn 6:7). As if to say: mathematically, it is impossible. Another disciple, meanwhile, sees the young person and makes an equally pessimistic comment: "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?" (v. 9). For Jesus, though, those five loaves and two fish were enough, enough to perform the famous miracle of the multiplication of the loaves. Likewise with us: the little things we have, even our sins, are enough for Jesus. And what should we do? Place them in the hands of Jesus: that is enough.

However, there is one detail the Gospel does not tell us, but leaves it to our imagination. How did the disciples persuade that young man to give everything he had? They may have asked him to make his lunch available, and he may have looked around, seeing thousands of people, and perhaps responded as they did, by saying, "It's not enough; why are you asking me and not handling this yourselves, as Jesus' disciples? Who am I?" Perhaps too, they told him that Jesus himself was the one who was asking. In any event, the young man does something extraordinary: he trusts. That young man, who brought his own lunch, *trusts*; he gives everything away, holding nothing back. He had come there to receive from Jesus, and now he finds himself giving to Jesus. Yet that is how the miracle happened. It started with sharing: Jesus' multiplication of the loaves and fish started with a young person who shared with him, for the sake of others. In Jesus' hands, the little he possessed became much. Faith is that way: it starts with giving freely, with enthusiasm and generosity, overcoming our fears and stepping forward! Dear friends, each of you is precious to Jesus, and also to me! Remember that no one can take your place in the history of the world and the Church: no one can take your place, no one can do what only *you* can do. Let us help each other, then, to believe that we are loved and precious, that we are made for great things. Let us pray for this and encourage one another in this! I ask you too, to help me by your prayers. *Köszönöm!* [Thank you!]
