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Pastoral Visit of the Holy Father Francis to Verona – Meeting with Children and Young People

At 9.05, the Holy Father Francis met with the children and young people gathered in Piazza San Zeno. After an exchange of dialogue with the children, the Pope left the Basilica of San Zeno and transferred by car to the Arena. There were 5,500 people present in the square.

The following is a transcript of the dialogue between Pope Francis and the children and young people during the meeting:

Dialogue of the Holy Father

POPE FRANCIS

Good morning!

Now let's begin our dialogue... Your friends will ask questions...

Question 1: In the Gospel, Jesus calls the disciples to follow Him even though they are not perfect. How can we hear His call?

POPE FRANCIS

This question is a very important question. How can I hear the call of Jesus? Because we see that in the Gospel, Jesus calls the disciples who were not perfect, they were common people, and I, an ordinary girl or boy, how can I hear the call of Jesus? Tell me something: when you are with your dad, your mum, your grandparents, do you feel good? [They answer: Yes!] And you feel that there, you have love: the love of your dad, your mum, grandad, grandma. When you do something good, for example, if you have two sweets and you give one to someone else, or if you see a person in need and give alms, do you feel good? [They answer: Yes! A lot!]. *Muy bien...*

And when, for example, you tell a lie, do you feel good? [They answer: No!] Good, good... And when you quarrel with your brother and sister, do you feel good? [They answer: No!] You have seen that you are capable of “feeling”: feeling good, feeling bad, if you listen or do something. When Jesus speaks – listen to this carefully – when Jesus speaks, He makes us feel good, He makes us feel joy in our heart. Do you understand? Yes! Now I ask: when Jesus speaks, how do we feel? [They answer: Good!] How? [They answer: Good!] Well done! And in this way we are able to hear the call of Jesus, that Jesus makes us feel good. And if a person comes to you who does not like you and gives you a slap, how do you feel? [They answer: Bad!] And if the devil comes to say something to you, how do you feel? [They answer: Bad!] So you have understood well what we feel when Jesus comes, and what we feel when someone does something bad. Have you understood well? [They answer: Yes!] When Jesus comes to us, what do we feel? [They answer: Good!]; and if we see or do something bad, how do we feel? [They answer: Bad!] Ah, well done! Good work!

Question 2: Jesus sends His disciples all over the world. How can we children be a sign of peace in the world?

POPE FRANCIS

Jesus sends His disciples all over the world, this is true. Because Jesus said to the Apostles: “The Gospel must be preached to all nations”. Jesus sends the disciples, the Apostles and all of us to preach in the world, certainly... But the question is: now, how can we be a sign of peace in the world? There are so many wars, so many wars, in Ukraine, in the Holy Land, in Africa, in Myanmar... Many, many wars. And does Jesus preach war or peace? [They answer: Peace!] And what do we want, war or peace? [They answer: Peace!] That is, we must be a sign of peace, mustn't we? [They answer: Yes!] But if you quarrel with a schoolmate, will it be a sign of peace? [They answer: No!] I can't hear you... [They answer: No!] We must be a sign of peace, share, sow good, listen to others, play with others, but not quarrel with others... Let us say it together: we must be a sign of peace! Together! [They answer: we must be a sign of peace!] You are good, you are good! Well done!

Now, the last question...

Question 3: We are boys and girls in the third year of middle school, who are doing the “Transition celebration”; how can we keep our faith in moments of difficulty, and not be afraid to make choices that go against the tide?

POPE FRANCIS

Good! A difficult question... How can we keep the faith in moments of difficulty, when everything is dark. For example, how can we keep the faith in the face of the death of a person very dear to us, grandparents, uncles and aunts, or even at times a father, a mother? In these difficulties, in difficult, hard moments, how can we keep the faith? Or rather, how can we go against the tide, because they say to us: “But do you want to go ahead? Steal this...”. Can one steal? [They answer: No!] No? You are not convinced... Can one steal? [They answer: No!] And in order not to do bad things, you must go against the tide, do you understand this? [They answer: Yes!] Do things that perhaps someone else does not do. How can we conquer the fear of going against the tide? I ask you this question. May someone brave answer... How can we go against the tide? [Someone answers: Listen to the heart!] Good! Another... [Someone answers: Be courageous!] Good, that is good, louder... [They answer: Be courageous!] Good, good! I like this.... Listen to something: do not be afraid of going against the tide if you want to do something good, do you understand? [They answer: Yes!] Should we be afraid of going against the tide? [They answer: No!] Ah, you are good! Thank you my friends, thank you!

Now we will say a prayer together, let's pray together. “Our Father...”. Now in silence we will receive the blessing. [Blessing].

In our life, should we bless or curse? [They answer: Bless!] Even bless the devil? [They answer: No!] Ah, all right... you are good! Keep going! Thank you!

