



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE
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**Apostolic Journey of His Holiness Francis in Luxembourg and Belgium (26 to 29 September 2024)
– Meeting with the Catholic Community in “Notre-Dame” Cathedral of Luxembourg**

At 16.00 this afternoon, after bidding farewell to the staff of the archepiscopal residence, the Holy Father Francis transferred by car to *Notre-Dame* Cathedral in Luxembourg where, at 16.30, he met with the Catholic Community of Luxembourg.

Upon arrival, the Pope was received at the main entrance of the Cathedral by the archbishop of Luxembourg, His Eminence Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich, S.J., and by the parish priest who brought him the cross and the holy water for aspersion. Two children offered him flowers. Pope Francis then proceeded along the central nave up to the altar, while the choir sang a hymn.

The welcome greeting from the Cardinal Archbishop of Luxembourg and a testimony from the young Diogo Gomes Costa were followed by a dance performance entitled *Laudato si'*, inspired by the life of Saint Francis, and testimonies from Ms. Christine Bußhardt, vice president of the diocesan Pastoral Council, and Sr. Maria Perpétua Coelho Dos Santos, presenting the linguistic communities. The Holy Father then delivered his address.

Then, after the transportation of the icon of Mary *Consolatrix Afflictorum* towards the Holy Father and a moment of contemplation of the statue, Cardinal Hollerich recited the prayer for the opening of the Marian Jubilee (400th anniversary).

After the laying of the Golden Rose and the final blessing, the Luxembourg Church presented the Pope with a gift.

Before leaving the Cathedral, Pope Francis greeted some bishops present. He then proceeded to the square in front of the rear entrance of the Cathedral to greet the faithful and, after crossing the internal courtyard for the blessing of the faithful and a brief greeting to some members of the Cathedral Chapter and the Episcopal Council, he left the Cathedral and transferred by car to Luxembourg-Findel Airport for the farewell ceremony from Luxembourg.

The following are the Pope's impromptu words and the address he delivered during the meeting with the

Catholic Community of Luxembourg:

**Words of His Holiness Pope Francis
after the Testimonies at the Meeting with the Catholic Community**

I would like to take up what you said about the drama of migration. Let us not forget a refrain that in the Bible, in the Old Testament, appears again and again: *the widow, the orphan and the stranger*.

Already in the Old Testament, the Lord says 'have compassion on those who have been abandoned'. In those times, widows were abandoned, orphans too, and so were foreigners and migrants. Migrants are part of this revelation. I express my thanks to the people and the Government of Luxembourg for what they do to assist migrants. Thank you!

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*Your Royal Highness,
Your Eminence and brother Bishops,
Dear sisters and brothers!*

I am very happy to be with you here in this magnificent cathedral. I thank His Royal Highness the Grand Duke and his family for their presence; I thank Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich for his kind words, as well as Diogo, Christine and Sister Maria Perpetua for their testimonies.

Our encounter takes place during an important Marian Jubilee: the Church in Luxembourg is commemorating four centuries of devotion to Mary, Consoler of the Afflicted, Patroness of this country. This Marian title corresponds well to the theme you have chosen for this visit: "To serve". Consoling and serving are in fact two fundamental aspects of the love that Jesus has given to us, the love he has entrusted to us as our mission (cf. *Jn 13:13-17*), and that he has shown as the only path to full joy (cf. *Acts 20:35*). For this reason, in the prayer for the opening of the Marian Year, we will ask the Mother of God to help us be "missionaries, ready to bear witness to the joy of the Gospel", conforming our hearts to hers in order "to put our lives at the service of our brothers and sisters". Let us now pause to reflect on three words: *service, mission and joy*.

First of all, *service*. We just heard it said that the Church in Luxembourg wants to be "the Church of Jesus Christ, who came not to be served, but to serve" (cf. *Mt 20:28; Mk 10:45*). In this regard, the image of Saint Francis embracing the leper and curing his wounds was also put forth. In connection to service, I would like to emphasize an aspect that is very urgent today, namely welcoming others. I mention this here among you precisely because your country has a centuries-old tradition in this regard, a tradition that is still alive, as Sister Maria Perpetua reminded us. We heard of it in the other testimonies and in your repeated shouts of "todos, todos, todos!", "everyone, everyone, everyone!". Yes, the spirit of the Gospel is a spirit of welcoming, of openness to everyone; it does not admit any kind of exclusion (cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 47). I encourage you, therefore, to be faithful to your legacy, to the riches that you have, and to continue to make your country a friendly home for those who knock at your door seeking help and hospitality.

To be welcoming is a requirement of charity but is foremost a matter of justice, as Saint John Paul II stated when he recalled the Christian roots of European culture. He encouraged the young people of Luxembourg to forge a path for "a Europe marked not only by goods and commodities, but by values, by men and women, by hearts", a Europe where the Gospel is shared "through the words you proclaim and your loving actions" (*Address to Young*

People of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, 16 May 1985, 4), both words and actions. I emphasize that we are in need of a Europe and a world in which the Gospel will be shared through the words you proclaim together with your loving actions.

This brings us to the second theme: *mission*. The Cardinal Archbishop just spoke about an “evolution of the Church in Luxembourg in a secularized society”. I liked the expression that the Church, within a secularized society needs to evolve, mature and grow. We cannot close ourselves off in sadness, resignation or resentment. On the contrary, we must accept the challenge while remaining faithful to the Church’s perennial values. We should rediscover and esteem anew these values as paths for evangelization, going beyond an approach of simple pastoral care to one of missionary proclamation, and this requires courage. In order to do this, the Church must be ready to evolve. This can happen through the examples mentioned by Christine: sharing responsibilities and ministries, walking together as a missionary community and making synodality a lasting way to relate among its members.

Our young friends have shown us a beautiful image of the value of this type of growth through their performance of a scene from the musical *Laudato Si’*. Well done! They did very well. Thank you for this gift! Your work is the result of a communal effort that involved many people in the Archdiocese. It is also a prophetic sign for us in two ways. Firstly, your work reminds us of our responsibilities towards our “common home”, and that we must care for it, rather than oppress it. At the same time, it also makes us consider that if we live out this mission together, it will become a magnificent piece of music we can sing in order to proclaim the beauty of the Gospel to all. It is also important for all of us to remember that what drives us to be missionaries is not the need to meet quotas or to proselytise, but rather our desire to make known to as many brothers and sisters as possible the joy of encountering Christ. And here I would like to recall a beautiful expression of Benedict XVI: “The Church does not grow by proselytism but by attraction”.

Thus, as we overcome difficulties, the living power of the Holy Spirit is at work within us! Love moves us to proclaim the Gospel, which opens us to others. Accepting the challenge of this proclamation allows us to grow as a community, thus helping us to overcome the fear of embarking on new paths and to welcome gratefully each other’s contribution. This is a beautiful, healthy, joyful dynamism that we would do well to cultivate in ourselves and among those around us.

And so we have reached the third word: *joy*. Diogo recalled his experience at World Youth Day and shared with us the happiness he experienced during the Vigil, as he waited for our encounter to take place, side by side with other youth from every people and nation. He also described his excitement when he woke up the next morning surrounded by so many friends. During the preparation for that event in Portugal he was full of enthusiasm, and now, a year later, he is filled with joy to be reunited with other young people here in Luxembourg. Do you see? Our faith is full of joy, it is a “dance”, because we know that we are children of a God who is our friend, who wants us to be happy and united, who rejoices above all in our salvation (cf. *Lk 15:4-32*; SAINT GREGORY THE GREAT, *Homilies on the Gospels*, 34,3). On this issue, please remember that the Church is damaged by those sad, dull, long-faced Christians. No, these are not really Christians. Please, have the joy of the Gospel, which makes us believe and grow so much.

I would like to conclude by recalling another beautiful tradition of your country. I have been told that you celebrate the Spring procession, *Springprozession*, which takes place in Echternach at Pentecost. This procession commemorates the tireless missionary efforts of Saint Willibrord, who evangelized these lands. The entire city pours out onto the streets and dances through the city squares, accompanied by the many pilgrims and visitors who join you. Moreover, the procession becomes a great unified dance. Let us remember that King David danced before the Lord, and that this is an expression of faithfulness. The elderly, the young, and everyone dances together – even in the rain, as was the case this year! – as they process towards the Cathedral, bearing enthusiastic witness to the beauty of walking together and meeting their brothers and sisters around the Lord’s table, as they commemorate this saintly pastor. Here, I would add just a brief word: please do not lose the ability to forgive. You know that we all need to forgive; but do you know why? Because we have all been forgiven and we all need forgiveness.

Dear sisters, dear brothers, the mission the Lord entrusts to us is beautiful. Let us *console* and *serve*, following Mary's example and with her help. Thank you to all the consecrated persons, for the work you do, and to all the seminarians, priests, and everyone. I thank you for helping the needy with such generosity. For where the needy are, there is Christ. I bless you and pray for you. And please also pray for me. Thank you.
