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Message of the Holy Father to participants in the Third Edition of “LaborDì”, promoted by the Christian Associations of Italian Workers of Rome

The following is the Message sent by the Holy Father Francis to participants in the third edition of “*LaborDì*”, promoted by the Christian Associations of Italian Workers of Rome, taking place today at the *Auditorium della Tecnica* Congress Centre:

Message of the Holy Father

Dear young friends!

I rejoice that *LaborDì* is taking place again this year, to promote dignified work and restore it to the centre. I thank the organizers, in particular Dr. Lidia Borzi, president of the Christian Associations of Italian Workers of Rome.

Perhaps until now, employment has seemed to be a problem for adults. As the elderly Bishop of Rome, I would like to say to you: it is not! You have already worked a lot, you know? How much effort and energy have been necessary for your growth? Certainly, much is what you have received, but the efforts of parents, teachers, educators and friends would be worth nothing without your response. It is true, each person knows that they have wasted good opportunities at times; however, life itself never tires of calling us to come out of ourselves. We have our “dens”. We build refuges, especially when confusion and threats are around us. But in reality, we are made for the light, for the open. So, as you go through adolescence, the scene of the world opens up before you. It may appear crowded and distracted as you arrive; yet, it still lacks your contribution, that for which you have always been expected. With you - and I would say to each person: with you - the new enters the world. Everything, truly everything can change.

Listening to the cry of the earth, of the air, of water, which a flawed model of development has hurt so much, I understood better a reality that today I want to share with you: in creation, “everything is connected” (cf. Encyclical Letter *Laudato si'*, 117; 138). This is why the contribution of each one of you can improve the world.

The newness of each person affects everyone. The world of work is a human world, in which everyone is connected to everyone. And, unfortunately, this “world” is also contaminated by negative dynamics and behaviour that sometimes make it unliveable. Alongside care for creation, care for the quality of human life, the pursuit of human fraternity and social friendship are necessary, because our connections count more than numbers and performance. This, too, makes a difference in the world of work. And you, as you approach it, it is important that you hold firm your uniqueness - which is independent of any success or failure - and the propensity to establish sincere relationships with others. In many circles you will then be a gentle revolution.

Last year I suggested to you the image of the worksite. Indeed, the approach to the Jubilee already began to turn our beautiful city upside-down. This year I am proposing another image, one that recurs often and everywhere, even in the messages you exchange at all times. I refer to the *heart*, which we usually associate with love, with friendship, but which in reality you also take to work, just as it beats within you at the time of school or university. For the Bible, the heart is the place of decisions. There our aspirations are born, dreams arise, resistance makes itself felt, laziness creeps in. You know your heart: protect it! At times it can be frightening and we can pretend not to feel it, but it remains ours, inviolable. We can always return to it. And there, if you have the gift of faith, you know that God awaits you with infinite patience.

I write these things to you because, as you enter the world of work, everything will seem fast. You may almost be overwhelmed by what is expected of you. You will be, as they say, have people you know or do not know breathing down your necks: so many demands, sometimes too many directions and recommendations. In these circumstances, learn to guard your heart, to remain at peace and free. Do not bend to demands that humiliate you and cause you discomfort, to ways of proceeding and demands that sully your authenticity. In order to make your contribution, in fact, you do not have to accept everything, even evil. Do not conform to models you do not believe in, perhaps to gain social prestige or extra money. Evil alienates us, extinguishes our dreams, makes us lonely and resigned. The heart knows how to notice and, when this is the case, one must ask for help and team up with those who know and care about us. We must choose.

Dear friends, we enter the world of work *together*. Not each person for him- or herself: we would rapidly become cogs in a machine, and those with power would be able to make anything of us. The Christian Associations of Italian Workers, which have brought you together, are an historic example of how important it is to associate, to transform the insights of the heart into social bonds. Together we can make dreams come true. The heart seeks friendships, it thinks by not isolating itself, it warms itself by empathizing. The heart knows how to be flexible and generous. It knows how to renounce something, while pursuing the ideal. It knows how to set goals, but cares how they are achieved.

And when work is organized without a heart, then the human dignity of those who work is endangered, or they cannot find work, or they adapt to unworthy work. Today it is the economy itself that realizes that know-how is not enough, that performance is not everything. Machines will increasingly suffice for this. The intelligence of the heart, on the other hand, is human, as is the reason that hears the reasons of others, the imagination that creates what does not yet exist, the imagination for which God has made us all different. We are “one of a kind”, let us help each other remember that.

I thank the adults who walk with you, and I say to them: let us not bend the young to the reasons of what exists, let us not corrupt their newness: let us give them our hand and introduce them to the long times and even the burden of responsibilities, let us trust in what has been sown in their hearts.

Dear young people, I encourage you to join forces, to build networks, also international ones, to repair the common home and to mend human fraternity. The human heart knows how to hope. The work that does not alienate, but liberates, starts from the heart.

Best wishes, then, for this day! I am with you, and I bless you from my heart.

Rome, Saint John Lateran, 17 December 2024

