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Pubblichiamo di seguito il testo del Videomessaggio che il Santo Padre Leone XIV ha inviato in occasione del 50.mo anniversario della *Steubenville Summer Youth Conferences*, Summer 2026 - United States of America:

Videomessaggio del Santo Padre

Dear friends,

I am happy to greet all of you as you gather in various locations for the Steubenville Summer Youth Conferences during the year that marks the fiftieth anniversary of these encounters. As you might know, this year we are also celebrating the eight-hundredth anniversary of the death of Saint Francis. Since this event is organized by the Franciscan University of Steubenville, I thought it would be fitting to reflect upon the message Saint Francis might have for young people today. I think that he could speak to us about many things, but especially authentic peace and perfect joy, for these themes were an important part of his life.

If you had met Saint Francis on the streets of Assisi in the thirteenth century, he might have looked at you with a serene and loving smile, and said: “*Pace e bene*,” that is “Peace and all good.” This was the way that Saint Francis often greeted people, and it expresses one of the desires in his heart. We too can ask ourselves: Do I desire true peace for those who come into contact with me? Do I treat others in such a way that brings them peace? Now, you may say that this is not always easy. Sometimes our behavior, even toward those whom we

most dearly love, can bring frustration and conflict rather than peace. We must bear in mind that Saint Francis was able to sow peace not because of his own efforts, but because he possessed within himself the source of true peace. I have often repeated that peace is a gift from God, a gift we receive when we invite the Lord into our heart. We are then called to become instruments of his peace, spreading it to our families, our communities, our countries and the whole world. I would therefore invite you to take advantage of moments of silence during this conference to discover the peace of Christ that he promised to give to his disciples (cf. *Jn 14:27*).

Saint Francis was also known to be a particularly joyful person. He delighted in the beauty of creation, in God's infinite goodness and mercy, and in the conversion of sinners. And yet, you may be surprised by how he once explained what perfect joy is. One winter evening, as he was walking back to Assisi with Brother Leo, one of the first members of the Franciscan order, Saint Francis began to give a long list of apparently "good" things that do not lead to perfect joy. At a certain point, Brother Leo finally exclaimed, "Father Francis, I pray that you will teach me about perfect joy!" In his response, the saint described a tragic situation that implied suffering cold, hunger and rejection — the opposite of what you would expect — and added that if such difficulties are embraced with patience, without complaining and with love for God, "This is perfect joy."

Is it really possible to have joy in such difficult circumstances, we might ask? It is only possible if our life is founded upon our relationship with God as a loving Father. Indeed, the joy of Saint Francis — the joy Saint Francis was speaking of — cannot be found through electronic devices, spending hours in front of a screen or endlessly scrolling on social media every day. These activities often waste precious time that could be used for moments of silent prayer, of cultivating authentic friendships, spending quality time with family, learning more about our faith, studying or playing sports. Joy should never be sought through drug use, alcohol abuse, promiscuity, superficial relationships, obsession about our image, or any kind of damaging behavior. Surprisingly, neither can it be found in goods such as wealth, beauty, fame or even health, for one day we will leave all of this behind.

Only the love of God can provide us with true and perfect joy. If we have the profound conviction that God cares for us as his beloved children, we will not be flustered or discouraged, even in difficult situations. Many of you have heard since you were little that God loves you. But do you really believe it? You are precious in God's eyes! (cf. *Is 43:4*) You are unconditionally loved by him! Are you certain of this? If you cultivate a trusting relationship with him, through regular prayer, through reception of the sacraments, if you abandon yourself into his hands, then anxiety, or sadness, and loneliness will fade away as his grace fills you and as his love inflames your heart. This is the secret to being able to face challenging circumstances with a smile. Open your hearts to discover this reality.

So Saint Francis' message, and mine, is simple: true peace and perfect joy are gifts from God that come when we open ourselves to him and trust in his power to transform us. What can we give him in return for such great love, for such generous gifts? Nothing but ourselves! Today, the Lord needs missionaries to spread the word to those who do not know him, holy men and women to begin loving Catholic families, priests to be spiritual fathers and ministers of the sacraments as well as religious men and women to be witnesses of the true joy of his kingdom. If you have a sense that the Lord may be calling you to one of these vocations, do not close yourself off or turn away in fear, but take a step forward and say to the Lord, "Here I am, send me!" (*Is 6:8*). At the same time, do not be afraid to talk to someone about it, a trusted friend, priest or religious sister.

I wish all of you a fruitful conference, praying that in these days you will be filled with Christ's love and come to know other young people who desire to give their lives completely to him, and in so doing, find true happiness. Entrusting all of you to the maternal intercession of Our Lady, Cause of Our Joy, I gladly invoke upon each of you the divine blessings of peace and strength.

And may Almighty God bless all of you, the ✕ Father, and the ✕ Son, and the ✕ Holy Spirit. Amen.

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