

Pope Francis' to young people (Christus Vivit 135-8)

God is the giver of youth and he is at work in the life of each young person. Youth is a blessed time for the young and a grace for the Church and for the world. It is joy, a song of hope and a blessing. Making the most of our youthful years entails seeing this season of life as worthwhile in itself, and not simply as a brief prelude to adulthood.

In Jesus' day, the passage from childhood was a significant step in life, one joyfully celebrated. When Jesus restored life to a man's daughter, he first called her a "child", but then addressed her as a "young girl". By saying to her: "Young girl, get up (*talitha cum*)", he made her more responsible for her life, opening before her the door to youth.

"Youth, as phase in the development of personality, is marked by dreams which gather momentum, relationships which acquire more consistency and balance, trials and experiments, and choices which gradually build a life project. At this stage, the young are called to move forward without cutting themselves off from their roots, to build autonomy but not in solitude".

The love of God and our relationship with the living Christ do not hold us back from dreaming nor require us to narrow our horizons. That love elevates us, encourages us and inspires us to a better, more beautiful life. Much of the longing in the hearts of young people can be summed up as "restlessness". St Paul VI said, "In the very discontent that you often feel a ray of light is present". Restless discontent, combined with exhilaration before the opening up of new horizons, generates a boldness that leads you to stand up and take responsibility for a mission. This healthy restlessness typical of youth dwells in every heart that remains young, open and generous. True inner peace coexists with that profound discontent. As St Augustine said: "You have created us for yourself, Lord, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you".

Pope Francis: New Paths for the Church & Integral Ecology, Querida Amazonia (17-8)

Even as we feel this healthy sense of indignation, we are reminded that it is possible to overcome the various colonizing mentalities and build networks of solidarity and development. "The challenge is to ensure a globalization in solidarity, globalization without marginalization". Alternatives can be sought for sustainable herding and agriculture, sources of energy that do not pollute, dignified means of employment that do not entail the destruction of the natural environment and of cultures. The indigenous peoples and poor need an education suited to developing their abilities and empowering them. These are the goals to which the genuine talent and shrewdness of political leaders should be directed. Not as a way of restoring to the dead the life taken from them, or even of compensating the survivors of that carnage, but at least today to be authentically human.

It is encouraging to remember that amid the grave excesses of the colonization of the Amazon region, so full of "contradictions and suffering", many missionaries came to bring the Gospel, leaving their homes and leading an austere and demanding life alongside those who were most defenceless. We know that not all of them were exemplary, yet the work of those who remained faithful to the Gospel also inspired "a legislation like the Laws of the Indies, which defended the dignity of the indigenous peoples from violence against their peoples and territories". Since it was often the priests who protected the indigenous peoples from their plunderers and abusers, the missionaries recounted that "they begged insistently that we not abandon them and they extorted from us the promise that we would return".