

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
to PORTUGAL
ON THE OCCASION OF THE XXXVII WORLD YOUTH DAY
(2 - 6 August 2023)

STATIONS OF THE CROSS WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS

"Parque Eduardo VII" (Lisbon)
Friday, 4 August 2023

[Multimedia]

Dear brothers and sisters, good evening!

Today you will walk with Jesus. Jesus is the Way and we will walk with Him, because He Himself undertook the journey. When He was among us, Jesus walked. He walked along healing the sick, caring for the poor, doing works of justice. As He walked He preached and taught. Jesus walked. But the journey most engraved on our hearts is the way of Calvary, the way of the Cross. And today you and I will prayerfully retrace the Stations of the Cross. We will see Jesus passing by, and walk with Him.

Jesus' journey is this: God going out of Himself in order to walk by our side. Often we hear at Mass that, "the Word became flesh and lived among us". Do you remember? The Word became a man and walked by our side; and He does this out of love, *out of love*. The Cross which accompanies every World Youth Day is the icon or image of this journey. The Cross is the greatest sign of the greatest love, the love with which Jesus wants to embrace our lives. *Our* lives? Yes! Your lives, the life of every one of you, each of us. Jesus walks for us. We must all say it: "Jesus undertakes this journey for me, in order to give His life for me". And no one has greater love than those who gives their lives for their friends, than those who give their lives for others. Do not forget this: no one has greater love than those who give their lives. Jesus taught us this; which is why, when we look at the Crucified Christ, though it be painful and difficult, we see the beauty of the love that gives its life for each one of us. A very devout believer once said something that struck me very much: "Lord, as I contemplate your terrible sufferings, I find myself able to believe in love". Lord, as I contemplate your terrible sufferings, I find myself able to believe in love.

Jesus walks along, but He hopes for something: He desires our company, He hopes that we will fix our eyes on Him. Perhaps He hopes to open the windows of my soul, of your soul, of each of our souls. How unattractive are those self-centred souls that strive and smile only inwardly. They makes no sense! Yet, Jesus walks along expressing His hope through love and tenderness, so as to give us consolation, to dry the tears of our lives.

Now I will ask you a question, but please do not answer out loud; each of you answer within yourself. Do you sometimes weep? Are there things in your life that make you cry? We have all cried in life, and we still weep. And Jesus is there with us, He weeps with us, because He accompanies us into those dark places that make us cry.

Now, in a moment of silence, let each of share with Jesus what causes us to cry in our lives; let us tell Him that now, in silence...

Jesus dries our hidden tears with His tenderness. Jesus wishes to relieve our loneliness with His closeness. Moments of loneliness are sad indeed, yet Jesus is there; He wants to relieve that loneliness. Jesus wishes to calm our fears, your fears, my fears; He wants to calm those deep fears with His consolation. He also desires to encourage us to embrace the risk of loving. Indeed, you know it well, better than I do, that to love is risky. We must take the risk of loving. Yet, though it is a risk, it is a risk worth taking, and Jesus accompanies us as we do. He always accompanies us, always walks with us. Throughout our lives, He is always by our side.

I do not wish to say much more. Today we are going to journey with Jesus along the path of His suffering, along the path of our worries, the path of our loneliness.

Now, in a further moment of silence, let each of us think about our own sufferings, our own worries, our own weaknesses. Do not be afraid, just think about them. And think of the desire our souls have to shine once more...

And Jesus journeys to the Cross, dies on the Cross, to enable our souls to shine. Amen.

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