

**Pilgrimage from Macerata to Loreto**  
**June 8, 2013**

**“Let us pray for faith as a present experience”**

Dear friends,

Your pilgrimage this year is entirely marked by the fact that it takes place during the Year of Faith. This circumstance sets before our eyes the request to bring with us during the walk: to ask for faith in Jesus Christ, our Lord and God, like the father of the child who says to Jesus, “I do believe, help my unbelief!” (Mk. 9:24), or like the Apostles, “Increase our faith” (*Lk 17:5*).

Benedict XVI explained to us the reason for the urgency of this prayer to Our Lady: “It often happens that Christians are more concerned for the social, cultural and political consequences of their commitment, continuing to think of the faith as a self-evident presupposition for life in society. In reality, not only can this presupposition no longer be taken for granted, but it is often openly denied” (*Porta fidei*).

Where is the point from which we can start again? Where do we draw the energy for constantly starting anew? Only in praying for faith as a present experience. “As a result of the education I received at home, my seminary training, and my reflections later in life, I came to believe deeply that only a faith arising from life experience and confirmed by it (and, therefore, relevant to life’s needs) could be sufficiently strong to survive in a world where everything pointed in the opposite direction” (L. Giussani, *The Risk of Education*). Your destination is not the relic of a past, but the sign of something that, beginning in the past, is happening now.

Pope Francis is, in this moment, the most powerful witness to this faith present that the Spirit has sent to His Church: “What is important is our encounter with Jesus, our encounter with Him, and this is what gives you faith because He is the one who gives it to you! (...) I would like to draw attention to this element: letting ourselves be led by Him” (May 18<sup>th</sup>, 2013).

May we not treat Jesus the way the Pope described during his homily on the day of Pentecost: “Often we follow Him, we accept Him, but only up to a certain point. It is hard to abandon ourselves to Him with complete trust, allowing the Holy Spirit to be the soul and guide of our lives in our every decision. We fear that God may force us to strike out on new paths and leave behind our all too narrow, closed and selfish horizons in order to become open to His own” (May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2013).

Only if faith happens again as a real event in our life will we be equal to the appeal of Pope Francis—not because we are better and more capable, but because we are more abandoned to He who “gives to everyone life and breath and everything” (*Acts 17:25*)—to go out into the “existential outskirts” to testify to the faith.

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