

**XXXI World Youth Day  
Krakow, July 2016**

**Message from Julián Carrón**

Life is full of unexpected things. “The world has been won over to Christianity in the end by this word that sums up everything: ‘mercy’” (Fr. Giussani). Who would have wagered on mercy to “win over” the world?

To keep us from ending up in confusion, the Church always proposes gestures that she offers to the verification of our experience. You have accepted one of these proposals by participating in the World Youth Day in Krakow together with young people from all over the world.

Do not forget what you have said *yes* to: to the Pope who invited all of you. Your *yes* is to educate you to a bond that is not a matter of opinion, but something of substance, the bond with Peter, the protector established by Christ for the safety of our journey. Those who will go to Krakow do so to discover more deeply the value of the Church, of belonging to something stable, with a point of reference that has a precise name: Pope Francis. Without this awareness our belonging would be fragile.

You go to Krakow with a precise reason: to ask Christ to free us. You go to ask on your knees, to beg like poor wretches for His mercy. Can someone perhaps think there is no need for His mercy? It would mean not recognizing the vastness of our own need, to which only Christ is the adequate response. “Jesus Christ came to proclaim and bring about the Lord’s everlasting time of grace.” (*Message for the WYD*).

The Pope invites us to immerse ourselves in the Holy Year of Mercy, acknowledging that the Lord continues to have pity on us. His love for us is gut-felt, from the depths of His being. He cares about our destiny and will never abandon us. “Open yourselves to His merciful gaze, so ready to forgive all your sins. A look from Him can change your lives and heal the wounds of your souls. His eyes can quench the thirst that dwells deep in your young hearts, a thirst for love, for peace, for joy and for true happiness” (*Message for the WYD*).

Going to the WYD, do not be in a rush to find an answer to your questions: hurriedness is the sign of the uncertainty that pushes us to want to grab something right away. This happens with the choice of your state in life. Should I get married or not? Should I enter the priesthood, or the religious life, or join the *Memores Domini*? Rather, concern yourselves with making the journey. If you make the journey, you will find the answer, an answer that the Mystery will give when you are ready to receive it, when you are truly open. Let us pray for this openness of heart. The Mystery gives you the vocation—you!—and will enable you slowly but surely to grasp the factors, the data for deciding, because in the end you are the one who decides: nobody can take your place, parents, friends, priests or leaders. Nobody! For this reason, we have to ask constantly, learning to abandon ourselves to the Mystery who gives us all the time we need.

“Lord, wake up! Don’t you care that we’re sinking?” “Why do you fear, O ye of little faith?” (cf. *Mt* 8:25-27), Jesus said to His terrified disciples on the lake during the storm. They were scared and He was peacefully asleep in the boat battered by the waves. Or imagine when Jesus was taken in the Garden of Gethsemane and Peter said, “No, no, this can’t be!”. He unsheathed his sword and started cutting off ears (cf. *Jn* 18:10-11). Jesus said, “Are you crazy?”. Why did Peter react that way? He was insecure. And why did Jesus have the opposite reaction? He was certain: He trusted in the Father. Who had the greatest awareness of all the factors of reality, Peter or Jesus? But we think we are more intelligent than God. Why did Peter feel alone and bewildered in the Garden of

Gethsemane and Jesus not? “The Father and I are one; the Father will never abandon Me.” (cf. *Jn* 10:30). Jesus looked at the essential, was clearly aware of the One who profoundly accompanied Him on His journey in the world.

Becoming aware of this is already an introduction to the WYD. The first step is to help each other in this. Remember: those who help you take a step are true friends, because as Fr. Giussani always told us, friendship is walking towards destiny, a “companionship guided towards destiny.”

My wish for you is that you may live the days of the WYD as obedience to Christ, to the way the Mystery reaches you today, knocks on the doors of your youth and gently asks if He may come in to fulfill in you the promise that you are.

As a form of training for the WYD I invite you to look full in the face the questions the Pope asked you in his message: “You, dear young man, dear young woman, have you ever felt the gaze of everlasting love upon you, a gaze that looks beyond your sins, limitations and failings, and continues to have faith in you and to look upon your life with hope? Do you realize how precious you are to God, who has given you everything out of love? Saint Paul tells us that ‘God proves His love for us in that, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us’ (*Rom* 5:8). Do we really understand the power of these words?”

My wish for you is that the Pope’s words will vibrate in each of you, so that at your return we can recognize in you true friends, witnesses of what is most pleasing to Jesus. “Let yourselves be touched by His boundless mercy, so that in turn you may become apostles of mercy by your actions, words and prayers in our world, wounded by selfishness, hatred and so much despair [...] in every sphere of your daily life and to the very ends of the earth. In this mission, I am with you [...].”

I am with you, too, offering my days for your journey.

Julián Carrón