

**MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
FOR THE 62nd WORLD DAY OF PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS**

[11 May 2025]

Pilgrims of Hope: the Gift of Life

Dear sisters and brothers,

On this, the 62nd World Day of Prayer for Vocations, I wish to extend to you a joyful and encouraging invitation to become pilgrims of hope by generously offering your lives as a gift.

A vocation is a precious gift that God sows in our heart, a call to leave ourselves behind and embark on a journey of love and service. Every vocation in the Church, whether lay, ordained or consecrated, is a sign of the hope that God has for this world and for each of his children.

Nowadays, many young people feel dismayed as they look to the future. Often they experience insecurity about their prospects of employment and a profound identity crisis, a crisis of meaning and values, which the confused messages of the digital world only aggravate. The unjust treatment of the poor and vulnerable, the indifference of a complacent and self-centred society, and the brutality of war all threaten the hopes for a fulfilling life that young people cherish in their hearts. Yet the Lord, who knows the human heart, does not abandon us in our uncertainty. He wants us to know that we are loved, called and sent as pilgrims of hope.

We, the adult members of the Church, and priests in particular, are called to acknowledge, discern and accompany the young on their vocational path. You, young people, for your part, are called to set out on that path, together with the Holy Spirit, who awakens in you the desire to make your lives a gift of love.

Embracing our specific vocation

Dear young people, "your youth is not an 'in-between time.' You are the *now* of God" (Christus Vivit, 178). Realize that the gift of life calls for a generous and faithful response. Look to the young saints and blessededs who responded joyfully to the Lord's call: Saint Rose of Lima, Saint Dominic Savio, Saint Therese of the Child Jesus, Saint Gabriel of Our Lady of Sorrows, the soon-to-be canonized saints Blessed Carlo Acutis and Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati, among many others. They experienced their vocation as a path towards true happiness through friendship with the risen Lord. Whenever we listen to Jesus' words, our

hearts burn within us (cf. *Lk 24:32*) and we feel the desire to consecrate our lives to God. Naturally, we want to find the way of life that will best allow us to return the love with which he loved us first.

Every vocation, once perceived in the depths of the heart, gives rise to an impulse to love and service, as an expression of hope and charity, rather than a means of self-promotion. Vocation and hope go together in God's plan for the happiness of each man and woman, all of whom are called by name to give their lives for others (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 268). Many young people seek to know the path God is calling them to take. Some find, often to their surprise, that they are called to the priesthood or to the consecrated life. Others discover the beauty of the call to marriage and family life, to the pursuit of the common good and to a life of witness to the faith among their friends and acquaintances.

Every vocation is inspired by hope, marked by confident trust in God's providence. For Christians, hope is more than mere human optimism: it is a certainty based on our faith in God, who is at work in each of our lives. Vocations mature through the daily effort to be faithful to the Gospel, and through prayer, discernment and service.

Dear young friends, hope in God does not disappoint, because at every step of the way he accompanies those who entrust their lives to him. Our world needs young people who are pilgrims of hope, who courageously devote their lives to Christ and rejoice in being his disciples and missionaries.

Discerning our vocational path

The discovery of our vocation comes about as the result of a journey of discernment. That journey is never solitary, but develops within a Christian community and as a part of that community.

Dear friends, the world pushes you to make hasty decisions and bombards you with a constant blare that prevents you from experiencing a silence that is open to God who speaks to the heart. Have the courage to pause, to listen to what your heart tells you, and to ask God about his dreams for you. The silence of prayer is indispensable if we are to learn how to hear God's call amid the specific circumstances of our lives and to respond consciously and freely.

Prayerful recollection helps us to realize that all of us can be pilgrims of hope if we make our lives a gift, above all by placing ourselves at the service of those who live on the world's material and existential peripheries. Those who heed God's call cannot turn a deaf ear to the cry of so many of our brothers and sisters who feel excluded, wounded and abandoned. Every vocation confirms us in our mission of being Christ's presence wherever light and consolation are most needed. In a particular way, the lay faithful are called to be the "salt, light and

leaven" of the Kingdom of God through their social and professional commitments.

Accompanying vocations

Consequently, pastoral ministers and vocation directors, especially spiritual directors, should readily accompany young people with the hope, patience and trust that reflect God's own "pedagogy." They should be capable of listening to them respectfully and sympathetically, and show themselves trustworthy, wise and helpful guides, ever attentive to discerning the signs of God's presence in their journey.

I urge that every effort be made to foster vocations in the various spheres of human life and activity, and to help individuals to be spiritually open to the Lord's voice. It is important, then, that adequate space be given to the accompaniment of vocations in educational and pastoral planning.

The Church needs pastors, religious, missionaries and spouses capable of saying "yes" to the Lord with trust and hope. A vocation is never a treasure stored away in the heart; rather, it grows and is strengthened within a community that believes, loves and hopes. No one can respond to God's call alone, for all of us need the prayers and support of our brothers and sisters.

Dearly beloved, the Church is alive and fruitful when she generates new vocations. Our world looks, often unknowingly, for witnesses of hope who proclaim with their lives that following Christ is a source of true joy. Let us never tire, then, of asking the Lord for new labourers for his harvest, certain that with great love he continues to call them. Dear young people, I entrust your efforts to follow the Lord to the intercession of Mary, Mother of the Church and Mother of vocations. Keep walking as pilgrims of hope on the path of the Gospel! I accompany you with my blessing and I ask you, please, to pray for me.

Rome, Policlinico A. Gemelli, 19 March 2025.

FRANCIS