

FAITH AND REASON

Do not give in to the blackmail of war: On Friday morning, 14 October, Pope Francis received in audience, in the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the participants in the “Christmas Contest”, organized by the “Gravissimum Educationis” Pontifical Foundation, in collaboration with the “Ausilia” Association. The Pope urged the young musicians present to counteract the growing “clamor of war... in Europe and in the world” with music, “because music is a universal language which crosses borders and barriers”. He encouraged them to “continue to dream of peace and to work for peace, scattering seeds of fraternity and social friendship”. The following is a translation of the Holy Father’s words.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning and welcome! I thank Cardinal Tolentino for the presentation of this initiative, which has the merit of giving a voice to the young, nurturing their creativity. For this reason, I am grateful to the Gravissimum Educationis Foundation, which inspires this network and has proposed the Christmas Contest; and the Ausilia Association, which works to increase opportunities for young people and has decided to support this project. And this year too I am pleased to meet you, young singers and musicians, who have decided to participate in the Contest. Inspired by the event of Christmas, it aims to promote the values of life, love and peace.

I address you, young artists. I do not know if I may give you some advice, may I? Alright. Do not try to copy the big “stars” of show business. Do not follow the trends and mindsets of success. Do not repeat the clichés of a false, mawkish Christmas, which has nothing to do with the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem and with its meaning for humanity today. Instead, do not be afraid to be yourselves. Will they criticize you? Yes, but be yourselves, original, creative. Your own personality in art. And above all, make sure that at the basis of your work there is wonder. We have lost the sense of wonder, and we need to rediscover it. Let there be wonder at the basis, wonder in the face of the unthinkable: a God who became flesh, who became a helpless child, born of a Virgin, in a cave, and whose cradle was a manger for animals. If one does not feel wonder, the song does not speak to the heart, does not communicate.... Besides wonder, another indispensable ingredient is simplicity. Beware: simplicity, not banality! No. Simplicity is an entirely different thing. The Nativity scene is simple, but it is not banal. The songs of Saint Alphonsus, such as “Tu scendi dalle stelle”, are simple, but beautiful and meaningful, and continue to move us and to nurture the faith of the people of God. And this is not sentimentalism, this is more, it is what comes from within, it is authentic.

With this creative style of wonder and simplicity, you can give your contribution to the cause of peace, which is the great gift God wished to give to the world with the birth of his Son. In these months, the clamor of war has been growing in Europe and in the world. Let us not give in to this blackmail, please! Let us not fall into this trap! Let us continue to dream of peace and to work for peace, scattering seeds of fraternity and social friendship. The outstretched hand, always the outstretched hand! You do this with music, and it is very valuable, because music is a universal language which crosses borders and barriers. Music also has an inestimable educational value. I underline this because this initiative is organized by the Pontifical Foundation that is inspired by a Council document on education. Music humanizes, and to educate means essentially to humanize. How we need to become more human today! That is why, fundamentally, God became man, to share this path with us.

Dear friends, I wish you all the best for this Contest and for your artistic progress. I bless you all, with your families, and I ask you to pray for me. And if one of you cannot pray, or does not know how to pray, at least send me good vibes, for I need them. **Thank you.**

The Lukewarm Soul is Like a Snail: A lukewarm soul is not yet quite dead in the eyes of God, because the faith, the hope and the charity that are its spiritual life are not altogether extinct. But it is a faith without zeal, a hope without resolution, and a charity without passion. Nothing touches this kind of soul: it hears the word of God at Mass, yes. But it often finds the Scriptures boring, listening with difficulty, more of less by habit, like someone who thinks that he knows enough about it and does enough of what he should. Any prayers that are a bit long are distasteful to the lukewarm soul. This soul is so full of whatever it has just been doing or what it is going to do next, its boredom is so great, that this poor unfortunate person is almost in agony. It is still alive spiritually, but it is not capable of doing anything to gain heaven. For the last twenty years such a soul has been filled with good intentions without doing anything at all to correct its habits. It is like someone who is envious of anyone on top of the world yet unwilling to lift a foot to try to get there himself. The lukewarm soul would not want to renounce eternal blessings for those of the world yet does not wish either to leave the world or go to heaven. If it can just manage to pass its time without crosses or difficulties, it would never ask to leave this world at all. The lukewarm soul is like a turtle or a snail. It moves only by dragging itself along the ground, and you can see it is getting from place to place with great difficulty. The love of God which it feels deep down within itself is like a tiny spark of fire hidden under a heap of ashes... **St John Vianney (Cure of Ars)**

Sligo Cathedral Parish Prayer: God our Savior in your loving providence you have brought us into being. By your Passion and Death, You gave us the possibility to be joyfully united with you for all eternity. We give you praise and thanks for the communion we share as members of the Body of Christ your Son gathered together as your Cathedral parish. We give thanks for each member of the Body particularly in our own parish for friend and stranger for the ones on the fringes and for those near the center. Fill us, we pray, with the Spirit of your Son. Guide us as you call us to build up the Body of Christ. Help us to see in our lives the moments and opportunities for caring confirming and reconciling. Bless us with the patience to overcome frustration. Bless us with hope as we journey together. Bless all members of the Cathedral Parish. **Amen**

Nature Proclaims the Beauty of God: Question the beauty of the earth, the beauty of the sea, question the beauty of the air, the beauty of the sky, question the ranks of the stars, question the sun making the day splendid with its radiant beams, question the moon soothing the darkness of the night with its gentle rays, question the animals that move in the waters, that stroll about on dry land, that fly in the air, question all these things and they will answer: "Look, we are beautiful". But who could have made these beautiful passing things if not the God who is beautiful and unchanging ... **St Augustine**

Pope Benedict XVI's Prayer for Vocations: O Father, raise up among Christians abundant and holy vocations to the priesthood, who keep the faith alive and guard the blessed memory of your Son Jesus through the preaching of his word and the administration of the Sacraments, with which you continually renew your faithful. Grant us holy ministers of your altar, who are careful and fervent guardians of the Eucharist, the sacrament of the supreme gift of Christ for the redemption of the world. Call ministers of your mercy, who, through the sacrament of Reconciliation, spread the joy of your forgiveness. Grant, O Father, that the Church may welcome with joy the numerous inspirations of the Spirit of your Son and, docile to His teachings, may she care for vocations to the ministerial priesthood and to the consecrated life. Sustain the Bishops, priests and deacons, consecrated men and women, and all the baptized in Christ, so that they may faithfully fulfill their mission at the service of the Gospel. This we pray through Christ our Lord. Amen. **Mary, Queen of Apostles, pray for us.**

A Thought For the Day

Sunday	Faith is the strength by which a shattered world shall emerge into the light.
Monday	The value of persistent prayer is not that God will hear us, but that we will finally hear God.
Tuesday	A little bit of mercy makes the world less cold and more just.
Wednesday	For everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under the heaven.
Thursday	The really happy person is one who can enjoy the scenery on a detour.
Friday	A candle loses nothing by lighting another candle.
Saturday	Whether we realize it or not, prayer is the encounter of God's thirst with ours. God thirsts that we may thirst for him.

Mary's Peace Prayer: Mary, Mother of God my mother, Queen of Peace, ask your Son Jesus to give me the gift of peace. Pray for me for peace; peace in my heart, peace of mind and of soul, peace in my family, peace with all whom I meet, the peace of Jesus. Jesus, my Lord and Savior, my Brother, King of Peace, I come to you with Mary, Queen of Peace, to ask you humbly for a new outpouring of the gift of peace. Pour out on me your Holy Spirit of Peace. Give me peace, Jesus, peace within myself, peace in my family, peace in my everyday life. Give peace to my nation, and to all nations, peace among all peoples, peace in the world. Jesus, my mediator with the Father, take me to the Father to pray for peace. Heavenly Father, our Father, my Father, I come to you with your Son Jesus. In Him and with Him and through Him I pray for peace.

The answer is very simple: God.... He has brought God, and now we know his face, now we can call upon him. Now we know the path that we human beings have to take in this world. Jesus has brought God and with God the truth about our origin and destiny: faith, hope and love. It is only because of our hardness of heart that we think this is too little. Yes indeed, God's power works quietly in this world, but it is the true and the lasting power. Again and again, God's cause seems to be in its death throes. Yet over and over again it proves to be the thing that truly endures and saves... **Pope Benedict XVI**

In His Will is Our Peace
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