

Church needs you as joyful disciples, Pope tells young people and deaf association

In back-to-back audiences with a group of French young people and an Italian association for deaf people, Pope Francis cited personal example and witness as a vital piece in the church's evangelization mission.

Meeting with young people from the Diocese of Aire et Dax in southwestern France April 25, the pope encouraged them to remain united with Christ through the sacraments and the example of the saints so that they can spread the message that "God wants to give to the world through your lives."

"Yes, let yourselves be transformed and renewed by the Holy Spirit to bring Christ to every environment and give witness to the joy and youthfulness of the Gospel," he said.

The pope told the young men and women their pilgrimage to Rome was an opportunity to reflect on the lives of the martyrs who remained faithful to Christ until the end.

The martyrs' example, he added, is important now more than ever "because many people today think it is more difficult to call themselves Christians and live their faith in Christ."

"The current context isn't easy, especially due to the painful and complex issue of abuse committed by members of the Church," the pope said.

"Still, I would like to tell you once again that it isn't more difficult than in other eras of the church: It is only different."

Pope Francis said that the youthfulness and enthusiasm of young people in the church is a visible sign that Jesus "does not abandon his church" and continues to entrust the church's renewal to younger generations.

"I am counting on you," the pope said. "The Church needs your impulse, your intuition and your faith!"

Immediately after, the pope made his way to the Clementine Hall and met with members of the Italian Federation of Associations for the Deaf. Founded in 1920, it is the oldest organization in the country representing the Italian deaf community.

Acknowledging the prejudice people who are deaf experience, "at times even within Christian communities," Pope Francis urged them to overcome "the

barriers that do not allow you to seize the potential of your active presence and go beyond your disability.”

“You teach us that only by taking on our limitations and frailties can we become builders – together with leaders and members of the civil and ecclesial communities – of a culture of encounter, in opposition to widespread indifference.”

Catholics who are deaf, he continued, are called to play an active role in evangelization and “place the fruits of the talents the Lord gave you at the benefit of families and all the people of God.”

“God’s presence isn’t perceived through the ears, but through faith,” Pope Francis said. “For this reason, I encourage you to revive your faith so that you may feel God’s closeness more and more.”

In this way, he added, “you can help those who do not ‘hear’ God’s voice to be more attentive to it. This is a significant contribution that deaf people can make to the vitality of the Church.”