

# Holy Hour Homily - Youth Pilgrimage Day

## I. Introduction

Less than two weeks ago, the College of Cardinals, with the help of the Holy Spirit, elected a new Holy Father to lead the Church, Pope Francis. And since then he's taken the world by storm.

He isn't doing this by spending millions of dollars on a public relations campaign. He isn't shaping his message to please people. He's capturing our attention by being who he always was - a man of simplicity and love. He's like a parish priest who happened to become our Pope. You could see this the Sunday after he was elected. He went to Santa Ana Church in Rome to offer Mass. Afterwards, he stood outside greeting parishioners, just like a parish priest. People were hugging and kissing him. Meanwhile, the security detail was going crazy.

A couple that I have known for many years is good friends with our new Pope. They told me that he has a beautiful and deep relationship with Jesus. This is what gets him up in the morning and this is what guides his thoughts and actions. And when he asks everyone to pray for him - he really means it. He depends on prayer.

## II. Walking By Faith

A day or so after his election as our new Holy Father, Pope Francis offered Mass with the Cardinals in the Sistine Chapel. He spoke to them simply and directly and in a way that relates to theme of our pilgrimage - walking by faith.

He called on them (and us) to do three things: "to walk, to build, to witness..." To walk . . . he said: "Our life is a path. When we stop walking, something isn't right." We are, he said, "to walk always in the presence of the Lord." To build . . . this is what Pope Francis said: We are "...to construct the Church. This means stones. Stones are solid but [we are] are living stones, anointed by the Holy Spirit. To build the Church, the Bride of Christ, on the cornerstone that is the Lord himself." To witness . . . again, let's listen to Pope Francis: "We can walk when we want to, we can build many things, but if we do not witness of Jesus Christ then it doesn't

matter.” Unless we’re witnessing to Jesus the Church is just another charitable organization.

### **III. The Cross**

Walking, building, witnessing – all require us to take up the Cross. We can say to Jesus, I will walk with you but let’s not talk about the Cross. As Pope Francis tells us, “when we walk without the Cross, when we build without the Cross, when we profess a Christ without the Cross...we aren’t disciples of the Lord. We are worldly . . . but not disciples of the Lord.”

Jesus said that if we’d be his disciples, we must pick up our Cross and follow after him. Our pilgrimage today begins and ends in the presence of the Lord. He is truly present in the Most Blessed Sacrament exposed on the altar. As we kneel before him today, let us allow Jesus to tell us how much he loves us. And let us tell Jesus in return that we love him, that he is the most important Person in our lives. And let us thank him because he took away our sins by dying on the Cross. This is the Person whom we meet when we kneel before the Blessed Sacrament, Jesus our Savior.

And our journey includes meeting Christ in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. This is where Jesus’ love for us meets up with our sins and failings. This is where we discover in a deeply personal way how much the Lord loves us. He loves our sins away . . . he frees us from the burden of our sins and frees us to live as his disciples, to carry the Cross with joy.

### **IV. One’s Specific Cross**

While we are gathered in prayer before the Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, in these moments of silent prayer . . . this is a good time to allow Christ to shine his light into our hearts. It’s a good time to let him show us the things in our lives that keep us from loving him and loving those around us . . . the sins that weigh us down and make us feel unhappy.

It’s also a good time to ask the Lord to carry the specific Crosses in our lives . . . it’s those things in our lives we’d really like to change if we had a magic wand. It might be an illness that you or a loved one is suffering from. It might be difficulties at home or in school or with your friends and peers. It might be doubts and worries

about your future. Jesus tells us, "Be not afraid..." and helps us pick up those Crosses not in frustration but in love and so often love opens so many doors for us.

## **V. Walking By Faith**

So often people walk through life alone and in the dark. They don't have a relationship with God or with other people. And they don't have truths and values to guide them. Kneeling here in this beautiful Church, how we should rejoice. Love has found us ... the love of Jesus ... a love that we know by faith ... and his truth and love guides us along the journey of life.

Before us is not a mere piece of bread or a mere symbol of the Lord but truly the Lord's Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity ... is Personal Presence... so that his heart can speak to your heart and to mine. Let us walk together spiritually and on the streets of Baltimore, walking with Christ, building up his Body the Church, and bear witness to Him who is the way the truth and the life! Amen.