
Pope in Canada: “What do we want to bequeath to those who come after us, a world at war or a world at peace?”

Over 50,000 people welcomed Francis at Commonwealth Stadium, where the Holy Father celebrated his first Mass in Canada. Francis greeted the welcoming crowds with a long tour in his Popemobile, on which he remained standing for long stretches, followed by a suggestive pilgrimage of healing at Lac Ste. Anne, pushed in a wheelchair. Before blessing the lake - and subsequently the faithful with its water – the Pope paused for a silent prayer, contemplating the beautiful site that is sacred to the indigenous peoples and Canadians. These two snapshots encapsulate Francis' second day in Canada. The homage to grandparents, on the liturgical feast of Saints Joachim and Anne, was the recurring theme. “Thanks to our grandparents, we received a caress from the history that preceded us”, Francis said in his homily at the stadium: “we learned that goodness, tender love and wisdom are the solid roots of humanity. It was in our grandparents’ homes that many of us breathed in the fragrance of the Gospel, the strength of a faith which makes us feel at home. Thanks to them, we discovered that kind of ‘familiar’ faith, a domestic faith. Because that is how faith is fundamentally passed on, at home, through a mother tongue, with affection and encouragement, care and closeness.” “This is our history, to which we are heirs and which we are called to preserve:

We are children because we are grandchildren”,

the Pope said. “Today, then, let us return to the sources of life: to God, to our parents and, on this feast day and in the house of Saint Anne, to our grandparents”, was Francis’ invitation during the homily at the “Lac Ste. Anne pilgrimage” where he recalled the shores of another lake, the Sea of Galilee, where Jesus carried out much of his ministry. That lake, “a place teeming with diversity”, became the site of “an unprecedented proclamation of fraternity; not a revolution bringing death and injury in its wake, but a revolution of love. Here, on the shores of this lake, the sound of drums, spanning the centuries and uniting different peoples, brings us back to that time. It reminds us that fraternity is genuine if it unites those who are far apart, that the message of unity that heaven sends down to earth does not fear differences, but invites us to fellowship, a communion of differences, in order to start afresh together, because we are all pilgrims on a journey.”

“In addition to being children of a history that needs to be preserved, we are authors of a history yet to be written”,

the Pope remarked at Commonwealth Stadium: “each of us can recognize ourselves for who and what we are, marked by both light and shadows, and by the love that we did or did not receive.”

“We received so much from the hands of those who preceded us. What do we, in turn, want to bequeath to those who come after us? “Rose water”, that is a diluted faith, or a living faith? A society founded on personal profit or on fraternity? A world at war or a world at peace? A devastated creation or a home that continues to be welcoming?”.

Only by answering such challenging questions, Francis said, can we create a better future: “A future in which the elderly are not cast aside because, from a ‘practical’ standpoint, they are ‘no longer useful’. A future that does not judge the value of people simply by what they can produce. A future that is not indifferent to the need of the aged to be cared for and listened to. A future in which the history of violence and marginalization suffered by our indigenous brothers and sisters is never repeated.” **“Here we can truly feel the choral heartbeat of a pilgrim people**, of generations who set out on a journey towards the Lord in order to experience his work of healing”, is Francis’ tribute

to the elderly at the Lac Ste. Anne pilgrimage, accompanied by the sound of drums, that characterized all legs of his journey, and which the Pope said he was struck by for it echoes the beating of many hearts, including the maternal heartbeat of the earth. “all of us need the healing that comes from Jesus, the physician of souls and bodies”, Francis said recalling once again the history of Canada and “the pain we bear within us.” “We bring to you our weariness and our struggles, the wounds of the violence suffered by our indigenous brothers and sisters. In this blessed place, where harmony and peace reign, we present to you the disharmony of our experiences, the terrible effects of colonization, the indelible pain of so many families, grandparents and children”, words in the form of a prayer. Followed by a tribute to women, and to their “vital role” in indigenous communities.

“The Church too is a woman, a mother”,

the Pope repeated. In fact, “there has never been a time in her history when the faith was not passed on in mother tongues, passed on by mothers and grandmothers. your presence here is a testimony of resilience and a fresh start, of pilgrimage towards healing, of a heart open to God who heals the life of communities.”

“All of us, as Church, now need healing”,

the choral prayer: “healing from the temptation of closing in on ourselves, of defending the institution rather than seeking the truth, of preferring worldly power to serving the Gospel. Dear brothers and sisters, with God’s help, let us help one another in offering our own contribution to the building up of a Mother Church pleasing to him: capable of embracing each of her sons and daughters; a Church that is open to all and speaks to everyone; a Church that is against no one, and encounters everyone.” “If we want to care for and heal the life of our communities, we need to start with the poor and most marginalized”, is Francis’ recommendation, calling on the faithful to heed “the plea of the elderly who risk dying alone at home or in a nursing home. Of patients who, in place of affection, are administered death. It is the muffled plea of young people who are more interrogated than listened to, who delegate their freedom to a cell phone, while in the same streets other young people wander about, lost, aimless, prey to addictions.”

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