

Pope Francis' Intention for May: Faith-Filled Young People

We pray for all young people, called to live life to the fullest; may they see in Mary's life the way to listen, the depth of discernment, the courage that faith generates, and the dedication to service.

Pope Francis prays specifically this month for young Catholics who will find in Mary the source of inspiration for a generous life. His prayer, however, extends to all young people. It is timely because the trust, the hope and the commitment of which he speaks are especially needed in our present world. It is full of anxiety at the pandemic and its effects, at uncertainty about education and finding work, at the shadow of war and of nuclear conflict and polarisation in public life, and at the overriding threat of climate change and its dire effects on the world that they will inherit. In such a world young people without a vision or a hope larger than themselves are particularly vulnerable.

The qualities which Pope Francis prays that Mary will inspire in young people are not confined to Catholics, of course. They describe a good human life and are found in young people from many backgrounds. They certainly speak of our hopes for the young people from many different religions and backgrounds whom we serve at Jesuit Social Services. We can see how desirable these qualities are if we imagine their opposites. We would regard as shallow and immature any young person who never listens, never reflects on what they are doing or on who they are, who never goes against the crowd and always takes the easy way out, and who never stops to help people in need. We would hope that as they grow older they will become more reflective and attentive to others and to the world around them.

If Pope Francis' intention is to bear fruit in generous young people, they will also need the support of other people to help them realise his hopes for them. To live fully we need to have seen examples of it in our upbringing. Young people will be able to listen only if they are encouraged and shown how to do so at home and in their education. Discernment also relies on learning and example, as does courage. Young people who become dedicated to service outside their immediate family, too, have usually found examples of outgoing generosity in their own family and perhaps also in programs at their school.

Pope Francis prays especially for young people who have a deep faith. Their reflectiveness will be nurtured by praying regularly. They will find in Mary and the saints an inspiration to seek depth in their own lives and to be attentive to others. Their faith and their way of living will be linked in a Christian imagination that will sustain them in the challenges that they meet. All this will need support in a Christian community both through their links with the worldwide Catholic Church and through their friendship with other young people inspired by the same deep desires and the same faith.