Vatican

Francis, the comic strip



Pope Francis walks past traditional flag twirlers as he arrives to lead his general audience in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican Sept. 20. (CNS/Paul Haring)

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Young people should love, believe and follow their dreams, never despairing because Jesus is always with them, Pope Francis said.

When life hits hard, they should try to get up again, letting others help them, and if they are bored, they should concentrate on doing good things for others, the pope said Sept. 20 during his weekly general audience.

Continuing his series of audience talks on Christian hope, the pope gave extensive advice on how to teach people, especially young people, to remain full of hope. No matter "where God has planted you, hope. Always hope," he said, explaining:

— Enemy No. 1 is not out there somewhere, but inside oneself. "Don't make room for bitter or dark thoughts."

— "Believe in the existence of the most noble and beautiful truths" and trust that God, through the Holy Spirit, is ushering everything toward the good, toward "Christ's embrace."

— Believers are not alone in their faith. There are others who hope, too. "The world goes on thanks to the vision of many people who created an opening, who built bridges, who dreamed and believed, even when they heard words of derision around them."

— Never believe the struggles here on earth are "useless." God never disappoints and he wants that seed he planted in everyone to bloom. "God made us to flower, too."

— "Wherever you are, build!"

— When life gets hard, and "you have fallen, get up. Never stay down. Get up and let people help you to your feet."

— "If you're sitting, start walking!" Start the journey.

— "If you're bored stiff, crush (boredom) with good works."

— "If you feel empty and demoralized, ask if the Holy Spirit may newly replenish" that void.

— Work for peace among people.

— Don't listen to those "who spread hatred and division."

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— No matter how different people are from one another, human beings "were created to live together. With disputes, wait patiently. One day you will discover that a sliver of truth has been entrusted to everyone."

— Love people. Respect everyone's journey — whether it be troubled or down the straight and narrow because everyone has a story behind them.

— Every baby born is "the promise of a life that once again shows it is stronger than death."

— "Jesus has given us a light that shines in the darkness; defend it, protect it. This unique light is the greatest richness entrusted to your life."

— Dream of a world still not seen, but will certainly come one day. Think of those who sailed oceans, scaled mountains, conquered slavery or made life better for people on earth.

— Be responsible: "Every injustice against someone poor is an open wound" and countless generations will come after you have lived.

— Ask God for courage every day. "Remember Jesus conquered fear for us" and "not even our most treacherous enemy can do anything against faith."



Young people wave as Pope Francis greets the crowd during his general audience in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican Sept. 20. (CNS/Paul Haring)

— If fear or evil looms so large it seems insurmountable, remember "that Jesus lives in you. And, through you, it is he, who, with his meekness, wants to subdue all enemies of humanity: sin, hatred, crime and violence."

— Be courageous in speaking the truth, but never forget, "you are not above anyone." Even if one feels certain that he or she is the last person on earth who holds to the truth, "do not spurn the company of human beings for this" reason.

— Hold onto ideals and live for something greater than yourself, even if it comes at a high price.

— "Nothing is more human than making mistakes and these mistakes must not become a prison for you." The son of God came "not for the healthy, but the sick" so people should not be afraid to get up again and start over when they fall, "because God is your friend."

— "If bitterness strikes, firmly believe in all those people who still work for the good; the seed of a new world is in their humility."

— Spend time with people who have kept a child-like heart. "Learn from splendor, nurture amazement."

— "Live, love, believe, and with God's grace, never despair."