Vatican

Francis, the comic strip



Pope Francis meets with European Jesuits in formation during an audience at the Vatican Aug. 1. (CNS/Vatican Media)

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The courage, prayer and creativity that should characterize every Jesuit's ministry must be especially present when ministering to young people who are unemployed and feel hopeless, Pope Francis said.

The pope met Aug. 1 with about two dozen European Jesuits currently involved in the order's formation process. They had been talking about communication and one asked Pope Francis how they can meaningfully communicate with unemployed young people when, as Jesuits, they will never know what it means to be without a job.

"This may be one of the most acute and painful problems for young people because it directly touches the heart of the person," Francis responded. People without work often feel they have no dignity; they probably can get food from a charity, but that is not the same thing as being able to earn a living and bring home food.

The changed global economy, he said, has placed finance above the concrete economy of production and services and that, in turn, has led to a focus on profits without concern for human beings and their dignity.

"Today I believe this is the great sin against the dignity of the person: moving the person from the central place," the pope said.

Knowing how to communicate with a young person who cannot find work, he said, is not a superficial concern. Too many young people have thought about or attempted suicide or seek escape in drugs and other forms of addiction.

"Brothers, creativity is needed!" he told them. "A courageous creativity to find ways to act in that situation."

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At the beginning of the meeting, and again at the end, Francis urged the young Jesuits to read and pray with Blessed Paul VI's speech Dec. 3, 1974, to the Jesuit general congregation and the remarks Fr. Pedro Arrupe, then superior general of the order, made Aug. 6, 1981, to Jesuits working in Thailand.

The late Arrupe's text, he said, focuses on the essential place of prayer in the life of a Jesuit, especially when determining how best to respond to new needs. And Paul's text focuses on the need for individual and communal discernment in those new situations.

"It takes courage to be a Jesuit. That doesn't mean a Jesuit should be reckless or rash, no, but have courage. Courage is a grace of God," the pope told them. "And one must have knees that are strong for prayer."