News



A pilgrim from Ghana asks others from his country to raise their hands during a World Youth Day catechesis session lead by Chicago Cardinal Blase Cupich at the Parish of Our Mother of Perpetual Help in Panama City Jan. 25. (CNS/Chaz Muth)



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To open up a conversation about what Mary's answer to God can teach the young, Chicago Cardinal Blase Cupich reached back into the life of his grandmother, an immigrant who carried a profound pain from a father who sent her away to another country with the parting words: "You're no good to me."

Life can produce moments of great pain, moments that can paralyze us with fear, Cupich told English-speaking World Youth Day pilgrims Jan. 25 during a catechetical session at Our Mother of Perpetual Help Parish in Panama City.

During World Youth Day, cardinals, bishops and others participate in sessions that allow for teaching and sharing and give pilgrims a change to ask questions. Though the events can take many forms, the young pilgrims present for the cardinal's session sat in the room of the small church and listened intently in the pews to hear his family story, which was mixed in with the account of Mary's acceptance. Mary, as an unmarried girl, probably faced great fear when presented with the possibility of being the mother of Jesus and yet she accepted, Cupich said.

But fear and pain cannot stop people if they trust in a God who promises to look out for them, he said. For his grandmother, being sent away in a painful manner did not stop her from creating a life, one that led to children and even grandchildren — including one who became a U.S. cardinal.

Sometimes, one of the pilgrims told the cardinal, there are people who find it hard to believe in God's love; what happens then?

"Make sure you don't give up on God's grace," Cupich responded, adding that whether it's pain, or whether it's a great honor, such as becoming the mother of God, a person has to get outside of him or herself and focus on a life of serving others.

Mary, for example, "didn't stay home and post on Facebook 'Hey, I'm the mother of God,'" he said to great laughter. Looking at the Gospel, one of the first things she did was to head out to help her cousin Elizabeth.

"You'll be happier if you serve others," the cardinal said.

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Whether it's fear or surprise, people must believe that God is putting each person in a position he wants, the cardinal said. That means a position to help others, he added.

"The Lord calls you to join him and accompany other people," the cardinal said.

Vennera Adedjeh-Mensah of Ghana said she appreciated that the cardinal did not approach the group, which filled the church, with a lecture.

"He brought it to our times and we were able to relate to it," she said.

Sometimes the world offers a view that material goods, or a life that says the "one with the most toys wins," is what will bring people happiness, but it does the opposite, Cupich told them. Some speak of what's called the "prosperity" gospel; "that's very dangerous," he said.

And that's not the Gospel of Jesus, he said.

But it's one that can easily call to today's young, said Adedjeh-Mensah.

"There are so many voices nowadays calling for you attention," she said. "But you have to find balance."

Cupich told the young people to keep the model of Mary firmly in mind.

"God is calling you to a life of happiness serving others," he said.

This story appears in the **World Youth Day 2019** feature series. View the full series .