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Young people from Portugal join Pope Francis in the window of his studio overlooking St. Pete

Young people from Portugal join Pope Francis in the window of his studio overlooking St. Peter's Square Oct. 23, 2022, as they help him use a tablet to be the first to register to attend World Youth Day 2023 in Lisbon. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

Cindy Wooden

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Vatican City — October 24, 2022
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"Spiritual arrogance" -- thinking one is holier or better than others -- is a temptation everyone faces and is a form of self-worship, Pope Francis said.

"Where there is too much 'I,' there is too little God," the pope told an estimated 35,000 people gathered in St. Peter's Square Oct. 23 for the recitation of the Angelus prayer.

Commenting on the Gospel parable about the Pharisee and the tax collector, the pope said the lesson Jesus was trying to teach was that to approach God, people must look inside themselves and be aware of their own needs and failings.

"Indeed, in humility we become capable of bringing what we really are to God, without pretense: the wounds, the sins and the miseries that weigh on our hearts, and to invoke his mercy so that he may heal us, restore us and raise us up," the pope said.

In the Gospel story, the tax collector "asks for forgiveness, and the Lord raises him up," the pope said, while "the Pharisee exalts himself, self-assured, convinced that he is fine."

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But not only does he praise himself and list all the good he does, the Pharisee expresses his disdain for others.

"This is what spiritual arrogance does," the pope said. Some may wonder, "'Father, why are you talking to us about spiritual arrogance?' Because we all risk falling into this trap. It leads you to believe yourself righteous and to judge others."

"This is spiritual arrogance: 'I am fine, I am better than the others: this person does this, that one does that,'" he said. Such thinking means "you adore your own ego and obliterate your God."

After reciting the Angelus, Francis invited two Portuguese young people to join him at the window of his studio overlooking St. Peter's Square. While one held a tablet, the pope became the first person to register as a pilgrim for World Youth Day 2023, which will be held Aug. 1-6 in Lisbon, the Portuguese capital. He made sure the young man and woman with him signed up next.