Vatican
Vatican News
Pope Francis greets a crowd of people while sitting in a wheelchair

Pope Francis greets people as he leaves an audience at the Vatican with members of the young adult section of Italy's Catholic Action, Oct. 29, 2022. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

Cindy Wooden

View Author Profile

Catholic News Service

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

Vatican City — October 31, 2022
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

The COVID-19 pandemic has weakened many parishes, but that community "in the midst of homes, in the midst of people," is still an essential place for nourishing and sharing faith, Pope Francis told Italian young adults.

The parish is "the normal environment where we learned to hear the Gospel, to know the Lord Jesus, to serve with gratuitousness, to pray in community, to share projects and initiatives, to feel part of God's holy people," the pope told leaders of the young adult section of Italian Catholic Action, a parish-based program of faith building and social outreach.

Meeting thousands of young adults Oct. 29, Francis said he knows that in most cities and towns the parish church is not the center of religious and social life like it was

when he was growing up, but "for our journey of faith and growth, the parish experience was and is important, irreplaceable."

With its mix of members, the pope said, the parish is the place to experience how "in the church we are all brothers and sisters through baptism; that we are all protagonists and responsible; that we have different gifts that are all for the good of the community; that life is vocation, following Jesus; and that faith is a gift to be given, a gift to witness."

Part of that witness, he said, is to show concretely how faith leads to charity and a desire for justice.

Advertisement

In the neighborhood, town and region, "our motto is not 'I don't care,' but 'I care!'" the pope said.

The "disease of not caring" can be "more dangerous than a cancer," he told the young people. "Human misery is not a fate that befalls some unfortunate people, but almost always the result of injustices that must be eradicated."

Francis urged the young people not to be frustrated or put off by the fact that in their parishes "the community dimension is a bit weak," something "which has been aggravated by the pandemic."

Learning to see each other as brothers and sisters, he said, does not begin with some parish meeting or activity, but with each person through prayer and, especially, through the Eucharist celebrated and shared in the parish.

"Fraternity in the church is founded on Christ, on his presence in us and among us," the pope said. "Thanks to him we welcome each other, bear with each other -- Christian love is built on bearing with each other -- and forgive each other."