

Christians without Mary in their life are orphans, pope says

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Pope Francis told a group of young people discerning a religious vocation to never go it alone, but always stay by their mother, Mary.

"A Christian without Our Lady is an orphan. Also a Christian without the church is an orphan. A Christian needs these two women, two mothers, two virgins: the church and Our Lady," he said Saturday.

The pope spoke off-the-cuff to a group of young men from the diocese of Rome during a brief moment of prayer at the grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes in the Vatican Gardens.

He apologized for being late to the evening appointment saying he was so engrossed "in a very interesting conversation" with someone, that he lost track of the time.

"Forgive me! This is not acceptable. Punctuality must be respected," he told them.

The pope told the young people that God had a vocation in mind for everyone, but that it was up to each person to "look for it, find it and then go on, keep going."

The best thing to do is always pray to Mary and keep her close when one needs to make a major life decision like the choice of one's vocation, he said.

A "test" to see if one is following the right Christian vocation is to "ask yourself: 'How is my relationship with these two mothers I have? With the mother church and the mother Mary?'" Pope Francis said.

"This will do you good; do not ever leave her and don't go it alone," he said.

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