



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II TO THE YOUNG PEOPLE GATHERED IN THE VATICAN BASILICA

Wednesday, 22 November 1978 Beloved Children, This weekly meeting of the Pope with the young and adolescents—so enthusiastic and so lively—is really a sign of joy and hope. A *sign of joy*, because where there are young people, adolescents, children, there is the guarantee of joy, since it is life in its most spontaneous and most exuberant bloom. You possess this "joie de vivre" abundantly and bestow it generously on a world that is sometimes tired, discouraged, disheartened, disappointed. This meeting of ours is also a *sign of hope*, because adults, not only your parents, but also your teachers, professors and all those who collaborate in your physical and intellectual growth and development, see in you those who will attain what they, perhaps—owing to various circumstances—have not been able to achieve. Therefore a young person without joy and without hope is not a real young person, but a man who has dried up and aged prematurely. For this reason the Pope says to you: Bring, transmit, radiate joy and hope! The subject of today's Audience is deeply connected with what I have recalled so far. On preceding Wednesdays, continuing the plan left almost as a testament by my late Predecessor John Paul I, I spoke of the cardinal virtues: prudence, justice and fortitude. Today I wish to speak to you briefly about the fourth cardinal virtue: *temperance, sobriety*. St Paul wrote to his disciple Titus, whom he had left as Bishop in the island of Crete: "Urge the younger men to control themselves" (Tit 2:6). Following the call of the Apostle of the Gentiles, I would like to say first that man's attitudes, deriving from the individual cardinal virtues, are interdependent on one another and united. It is not possible to be a really prudent man, or an authentically just one, or a truly strong one, unless one possesses the virtue of temperance. This conditions all the other virtues indirectly; but the latter too, are indispensable in order that man may be "temperate" or "sober". "Temperantia est commune omnium virtutum cognomen"—St John Climacus wrote in the sixth century (*Ladder to Paradise*, 15)—that is, we could translate, "temperance is the common denominator of all other virtues". It might seem strange to speak of temperance or sobriety to young people and adolescents. Yet, beloved children, this cardinal virtue is particularly necessary for you, who are in the marvellous and delicate period in which your biopsychical reality grows to perfect maturity in order to be capable, physically and spiritually, of facing up to the vicissitudes of life in its most diverse requirements. A temperate man is one who does not abuse food, drinks, pleasures; who does not drink alcoholic beverages to excess; who does not deprive himself of consciousness by using drugs or narcotics. We can imagine within us a "lower self" and a "higher self". In our "lower self" our "body" is expressed with its needs, its desires, its passions of sensible nature. The virtue of temperance guarantees every man the control of the "lower self" by the "higher self". Is it a question, in this case, of a humiliation, a disability, for our body? On the contrary! This control gives it new value, exalts it. A temperate man is one who is master of himself; one in whom passions do not prevail over reason, over will, and even over the heart. We understand, therefore, how the virtue of temperance is indispensable in order that the person may be

fully man, in order that the young person may be truly young. The sad and degrading spectacle of an alcoholic or a drug addict makes us understand clearly that "to be a man" means, before everything else, to respect one's own dignity, that is, to let oneself be guided by the virtue of temperance. To control oneself, one's passions, sensuality, does not at all mean becoming insensitive or indifferent; the temperance of which we are speaking is a Christian virtue, which we learn from the teaching and the example of Jesus, and not from so-called "Stoic" morality. Temperance requires from each of us specific humility with regard to the gifts that God has placed in our human nature. There is "the humility of the body" and that "of the heart". This humility is a necessary condition for man's interior harmony, for his interior beauty. Think it over carefully, you young people, who are just at the age in which one is so eager to be handsome or beautiful in order to please others! A young man, a young woman, must be beautiful first and foremost inwardly. Without this interior beauty, all other efforts aimed only at the body will not make—either him, or her—a really beautiful person. And my wish for you, beloved children, is that you will always be radiant with interior beauty!

© Copyright 1978 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana

Copyright © Dicastero per la Comunicazione - Libreria Editrice Vaticana