



Welcome to Veritas

Speech

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Corpus Christi College, Bateman
Friday 6 July, 2018

My task tonight is very simple. It is to say “welcome”, to thank you for coming, and to encourage you to throw yourself into the weekend with energy, with enthusiasm, with hope and with openness to everything this weekend has to offer you – which is really to say everything the Lord wants to offer you.

The theme for the weekend comes from Pope Francis. It is the theme he gave us for the next Synod of Bishops in Rome and it is the theme we have adopted for this Year of Youth here in Australia: *Open new horizons for spreading joy*. When Pope Francis expanded on this theme a couple of years ago at World Youth Day in Poland he said this:

Following Jesus demands a good dose of courage, a readiness to trade in the sofa for a pair of walking shoes and to set out on new and uncharted paths. To blaze trails that open up new horizons capable of spreading joy, the joy that is born of God’s love.

Here in Australia we would probably say “*get off the couch*” rather than “*trade in the sofa*” but I think we get the point. Pope Francis is really asking the young people of the Church to get involved, make some noise, ask your questions, and expect great things from yourself, and from each other, and from all the other members of the Church as well. At the same time I think he would also ask us to be patient with each other, not too quick to find fault in each other or to condemn each other, and instead be very quick to forgive each other and make excuses for each other and be realistic about what we can achieve today and what might need to wait for tomorrow. After all Pope Francis is the one who reminds us, every chance he gets, that Jesus is the face of God the Father’s mercy. If we are going to try to be good disciples of Jesus, or at least give the possibility some serious consideration, then that’s what we are called to be as well: people who in our lives and our actions, and especially in the way we treat each other, bring alive the understanding, and the patience and the quick forgiveness and mercy, of God towards us.

Maybe this is one of those new horizons we might get a glimpse of over this weekend. It is certainly one that will bring joy into people’s lives, including our own. Who knows what other horizons might open up for each of you throughout this weekend? Who knows what you might discover about yourself, or about the friends you have come with, or about the Church you thought you knew but maybe really don’t, or about the Jesus you thought you knew but maybe really don’t? Weekends like this can be exciting, and exhausting, and invigorating, but also sometimes challenging and even life-changing. You need to be prepared for anything. You might end up at the end of the weekend seeing yourself, and others, and your life itself, a bit differently from you way you do now. Don’t be afraid of this possibility: don’t run away from it. It may be the very chance God is



offering you to discover just how you can become the person God created you to be and you in your heart of hearts want to be.

So, as Jesus said so often during his life to his disciples, “don’t be afraid”. Let God fill you with courage and hope this weekend. Let him inspire you by what you see and hear. Let God unsettle and challenge you if that is what God wants to do for you and what you need God to do for you. And most of all trust that God is with you now and will be with you over this weekend, just as he will continue to be with you as your life unfolds.

So get off the couch, make some noise, grab the chance this weekend offers you with both hands and start spreading that joy which Pope Francis speaks about.

Thanks for listening and have a great time.