

1st Appearance: *The young man*

"A young man seated in the empty tomb said to them: 'Do not be terrified. You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen, he is not here.'"

Mark 16:5-6



We revere the young as God even though they are not God.

Castle St. Angelo is a later name given to Hadrian's tomb. The young man appears to us against the background of this tomb, whose lower recesses are visible beyond the bars separating him from the grounds of that ancient house of the dead.

Christian tradition, which we evoke every time we recite the *Creed* – *he descended into hell* – holds that Jesus' first risen appearance was to Adam in the netherworld. The office of readings for the Easter vigil, in fact, offers this passage from St. Stephen, one of the Greek Fathers of the Church:

"God died in the flesh and descended into hell desirous of visiting those who dwell in the darkness of the shadow of death. The Father and his Son went down to liberate Adam and Eve from the prison of their suffering.

"The Lord greeted them carrying the weapon of his victory, the cross. Seeing him, Adam struck his breast out of wonder and cried out for all to hear: 'The Lord be with you!'

"After responding, 'And with your spirit!' Christ took Adam's hand, gave him the cross, and said, 'Wake up, rise from the dead, and I will give you light. Go! Leave this place of death. For you I shared human weakness, but now I am liberated from death. For you who were shut out of the garden of Eden, I was betrayed in a garden. In a garden I was put on a cross. Now that cross becomes the new tree of life. I have come not simply to return you to your earthly paradise; instead I put you on a heavenly throne. Now it is ready. Now I order the cherubim who once guarded you to adore you as God even though you are not God. Go now and sit on the throne of the kingdom of heaven."

The young man in the photograph is Adam, created in God's image, fallen through sin, and brought up from darkness. A pedagogy based on trust means seeing the image of this young man-Adam, God's icon and prize – in every young person we know – Christian or non-Christian. It means revering the young as God even though they are not God.

Prayer Father, we praise you for creating your children full of divine light and for never abandoning them no matter how long they wander in darkness. You who sent your Son to draw them out of the shadowy place of their errors, duplicity, violence and guilt, fill us with the light to see their divine possibilities and to trust in their capacity to fulfill them.

Hymn Canticle of the three young men freed from the fire - Daniel 3:49-100

2nd Appearance: *Mary Magdalene*

"He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils."

Mark 16 9

The Lord is risen and present in the young who seek to transcend their fragility.

The ministry of pardon in preparation for World Youth Day was an impressive effort on the part of organizers and volunteer ministers. More than 2,000 priests used 32 languages in welcoming long lines of young penitents from 7:00 a.m. until midnight over three days.

But Fr. Luca Ferrari, organizer, insists that the priests were not the only protagonists: "Normally, the sacrament of reconciliation is a private experience and the priest is the only person who mediates God's mercy. In this communal celebration, however, young people acted as ministers along with the priest. They welcomed the penitents, read a passage from the Gospel of Mark (10:17-25) with them, listened to them and accompanied them along the way, leading them, after the encounter with a priest confessor, to the point where they evoke the choice which Jesus presented to the young man in the passage."

Some left in tears testifying to the pain they've been living through; others smiled with joy despite their wait in the 2 o'clock sun, "because a shadow has just been lifted from our souls," said Ivan, 22, using his jeans to wipe the dust from his hands.

The young woman, bathed in light, is an appearance of the risen Lord to the priest in the shade, and to all who minister to youth. How so? One commentator put it this way: "The pope guided them, encouraged them and supported their motives a hundred times over, but they surprised many Catholics, even cardinals, bishops and priests who feel threatened by their call to greater authenticity. Theirs is a patrimony that should not be squandered. They give an intoxicating sense of excitement to those members of the hierarchy who are aware of being only a small minority of society; but these World Youth Days challenge even them to change their mentality, to modify their pastoral strategies, and even to an examination of conscience. It is not a given that bishops, priests and educators are automatically the most convincing or authentic believers."



Prayer Lord, in your goodness you desire to liberate the young from the demons within them and from the secular "morality-free zone" which surrounds them. We praise you for their desire for correction and self-transcendence. Liberate us from the low expectations we have for the young people we know. Help us to trust that they are capable of making gospel values their rule of life and your mercy their source of hope when they fail.

Hymn Psalm 103-Your youth is renewed

3rd Appearance: *The Two Marys*

"The women, filled with great joy, hurried away from the tomb and ran to carry the good news to his disciples." *Matthew 28: 8*



Jesus is risen and appears to us through the joy of young people.

In Matthew's account, the women who went to embalm Jesus' body were the first to experience the resurrection. After filling them with joy, the Lord sent the women out-two-by-two in his fashion – as apostles to the apostles. In a similar way, these young women and their peers were apostles to their elders in Rome and in the Church. Like the two Marys, they spread enthusiastic news about Jesus which many considered too good to be true.

An editorial in the paper *Il Messaggero* tells how secular Rome received the good news: "Our city has been conquered by the joy of the young people who have come to find lasting happiness. By their joyful testimony of life without drugs and alcohol, without fixation on sex, without apparent illusions. Even though it realizes that they are not saints, Rome has been conquered by their special kind of joy, which doesn't leave a bitter aftertaste or a haunting afterthought once the feast is over."

"They are at the same time absolutely identical with and truly different from their contemporaries, especially in their way of searching for happiness. They showed joy marked by serenity, not by vulgarity or aggressiveness. It didn't come from artificial stimuli, it came from within them. The challenge to us lies in the ingredients of their joy: capacity to keep silence, even for hours, in order to enter into themselves, readiness to make sacrifices, intense purity as a condition for love given priority over the quest for pleasure."

Crescenzo Sepe, jubilee secretary speaks for the Church. "The Church received a great deal from the young people who came to Rome: their vitality, their enthusiasm, the freshness of their testimony. They are much more than a resource and a richness. They are also a committed force taking strong pastoral responsibility for the local churches from which they came. They did not come with empty hands; their warm embrace and friendly manner succeeded in involving the families, parishes and schools which welcomed them. Our encounter with these young believers from every part of the world was an encounter with Christ. At almost every moment through almost every act their Roman pilgrimage turned into an immense catechesis to our benefit."

Prayer Father, the good news that excites this great "continent" of the young is that Jesus is their friend, confidante, and brother. He pardons them, conquers evil and is the way to true humanness. Help us to invest the same energy they do in building communion with him and with our brothers and sisters, trusting that doing so can give us deeper joy than life's passing pleasures.

Hymn Emmanuel

4th Appearance: *Peter*

"The Lord has risen indeed and has appeared to Simon." *Luke 4:34*

The Lord is risen and appears to the pope through columns of youth.

This cluster of Chinese youth is appearing to Peter in the person of his successor, Pope John Paul II, who is passing into St. Peter's Square to welcome them. They appear to him as a youthful column of the Church come to support his faith and renew his energy, fulfilling the Lord's resurrection promise to be with Peter for all generations.

To eyewitnesses it was clear that they renewed the youth of the pope. During this weekend John Paul II took visible pleasure and was touched emotionally at a deep level while spending eight full hours with the young pilgrims praying, listening, and presiding over liturgies. He did the "wave"; he kissed and hugged with great warmth all the young people who came up to him; he let himself be carried by the spontaneous spirit of the huge youthful crowd, clapping with them and keeping rhythm with their music; while reading the text of his homily he suddenly started singing a Polish eucharistic hymn. "Rome will never forget this commotion," he kidded them. "You are my joy and my crown," he told them at the end, "go and set fire to the world."



The pope's own words give witness to what he experienced. After the concluding mass he told his enthusiastic audience, "I'm leaving here rejuvenated."

Later he reflected, "If there is an image of the Jubilee that more than any other will live on in my memory, it is surely the streams of young people with whom I was able to engage in a sort of very special dialogue, filled with mutual affection and deep understanding. It was like this from the moment I welcomed them in the Square of Saint John Lateran and Saint Peter's Square. Then I saw them teeming through the city, happy as young people should be, but also thoughtful, eager to pray, seeking meaning and true friendship. Neither for them nor for those who saw them will it be easy to forget that week, during which Rome became 'young with the young.' Yet again, the young have shown themselves to be for Rome and for the Church a special gift of the Spirit of God, ... the 'morning watchmen' at the dawn of the new millennium."

Prayer After the Gospel of the welcome ceremony, the Holy Father asked "What have you come in search of?" No answer. He asked again. No answer. "Then let me ask you, WHO have you come in search of?" The crowd went crazy: "Jesus Christ!" The pope said, "But Jesus Christ has first gone in search of you!"

Jesus, you showed your trust in Peter by asking him hard questions. Peter's successor asks hard questions of the young. Give us enough trust in them to demand much of them and to provoke them to go beyond the easy answers.

Hymn

5th Appearance: *Road to Emmaus*

"They halted in distress. ... Then they recounted what had happened on the road and how they had come to know him." *Luke 24: 18, 35*



Jesus is risen and appears in companions.

The 2,000-year-old road between the Arch of Constantine and the Coliseum is physically difficult; pedestrians avoid it for fear of twisting an ankle. Some of the deep crevices between its paving stones are visible behind the youth at the left. It is also a difficult passage on another level. On the Coliseum end of it, the emperors martyred Christians. On the other, the arch celebrates the emperor who converted the empire to Christ. Historically speaking, the Roman road from persecuting the Faith to embracing it was 300 years long.

The disciples on the way to Emmaus walked a similar road from distress to triumphant faith.

The persecution which young Christians face today may not be systematic, but it is often disheartening. For example, some were hurt by cynical

television transmissions of World Youth Day which "asked the opinion only of intellectuals, politicians, secular journalists, atheists and non-believers, who dismissed 2 million young people as fundamentalists or dreamers."

Sometimes the rough road is internal. A young French pilgrim leaving the Paris airport said on camera that he was going to Rome in hope of finding girls. A university student in Rome for the jubilee came to visit the general house with a friend. The latter, who came full of idealism, didn't hide the disillusionment he felt at witnessing rivalries between youth of different nationalities competing for sparse accommodations where he was staying. He was discouraged by their "non-evangelical" behavior.

The wheelchair symbolizes youthful faith crippled by ambivalence from within or discouragement from without. The risen Lord is present in the companions guiding it through rough terrain. On the road to Emmaus, Jesus was a sensitive companion on the challenging road to faith. At the Jubilee, he was present not only in the three companions pictured, but in the 25,000 blue-vested volunteers from all over the world and in the countless counselors and catechists who accompanied their peers through the Holy Door leading to Christ and through all the doors of brotherhood which led to helping others to bear what they carry deep inside: doubts, hopes, lights and shadows.

Prayer Jesus, you appeared at just the right time to accompany those whose faith was at the breaking point. We bless you for young people who do the same for their peers with gentle, human faith that respects others' liberty and dignity and extends to the weak and marginalized. May the inspiration we receive from generous peer ministers and volunteers make us more trusting companions of the youth who come to us in times of difficulty.

Hymn

6th Appearance: Peace be with you

"Peace be to you. Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them." *John 20:19-23*

Jesus is risen and appears to us in youthful artisans of peace.

No single word sums up Jesus' post-resurrection message better than the consoling and oft-repeated greeting; "Peace!" It was peace that most struck observers about the spirit of the World Youth Day. The photo is a portrait of faces aglow with the calm of dawn and the serenity of peace.

Journalist Maria Louisa Spaziani wrote, "I decided to undertake the marathon of going, staying, and returning to Tor Vergata on foot with a variety of groups of foreign youth. I made a point of stopping to talk with them: polite, smiling, enthusiastic. And, with their inner vision, all of them seemed genuinely to be looking confidently in the same direction.

"I can't help but compare these extremely varied ethnic groups to the groups of young fans who invade Roman piazzas before football games. Those too are looking in the same direction, the victory of their team, but the majority of them yell out insults and threats at the opposing teams. Many times I've even seen them carrying on their shoulders a pole from which their most hated adversary hangs in effigy. By contrast, at Tor Vergata there was an extraordinary atmosphere of peace, of understanding, and of brotherhood.

"I followed the whole ceremony, including the procession composed of young people – in Shakespeare's words 'unarmed and defenseless' – praying, 'Lord, fill us with your gentle force.' Gentle force – what a beautiful paradox!"

In his homily that day, Pope John Paul, who earlier had told a youthful crowd at St. Peter's about the impact World War II had on him, made a contrast of his own: "Never has such an impressive number of young people come together in Italy in a spirit of peace – expressly for the purpose of promoting peace. In the course of the century coming to an end, young people like you were gathered together in vast numbers to learn to hate, to be sent into combat to fight one another. Secular utopias which tried to eradicate and replace Christian hope have been revealed for what they are: hell – pure and simple. Today you are assembled here to affirm that in the new century you will never let yourselves be used as instruments of violence and destruction. You will be defenders of peace, paying with your very person if necessary."

Prayer Lord, you who answered violence with meekness during your passion and calmed fears after your resurrection have made peace an unmistakable sign of your presence. Often the young understand this better than we do. We give thanks for the conscientious objectors among them, the protestors against armed conflict, and those who assemble to pray for an end to violence. May we join with them to become peacemakers.

Hymn of Praise – PS 116 God Listens Whenever I Speak



7th Apparition: *Thomas*

"Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

John 20:29



Jesus is risen and appears to us in the trust young people place in the Church.

One of the mysteries of the Jubilee of Young People was its young participants' demonstration of implicit trust in the Church despite its faults. The girl in the photograph is like Thomas at the start of this appearance – separated from her group, arriving in last place. But she is also like Thomas farther on in the account, at the instant his touch of Jesus' risen body releases a luminous current of faith in him.

Thomas found faith by touching Jesus' wounds. This ancient statue of Peter represents the hierarchical body of the Church, aged, worn, and full of sinful members. Touching the Church's "feet of clay," this girl nevertheless glows with faith.

A 19-year-old pilgrim gave this testimony: "After going through the Holy Door, I moved towards St. Peter's tomb. It's hard to describe how I felt when I saw it. Just knowing that I was able to pray at the final resting place of the person Jesus chose to lead the early Church was powerful. I found myself praying that Peter's strength, commitment and courage would be part of my journey as well. But realizing that even Peter made mistakes, I also found myself thanking God for choosing to put His Church in the hands of someone so very human." (Sherry, USA, August 18)

What inspired the massive demonstration of trust in the Church?

Crescenzo Sepe, jubilee secretary, answers: "These young people came in such numbers to Rome, I believe, first and foremost because they know that the Church loves them and prizes them. That is why they felt so quickly at home and welcome."

Giorgio Rumi, foremost Catholic intellectual and professor of modern history at the state university of Milan, offers his analysis: "The secular democracies live in a state of suspended judgment. They seem lacking in a system of values. They are victims of the error of permissiveness. They have created a culture based on individual rights to the detriment of personal duty. On the other side, Catholicism gives answers, has ideas about life, death and social relationships. It pronounces itself on ethical issues like biological engineering and capital punishment. In a word, it seems to have a robust system of reference and, as the Jubilee of Young People shows, it is not afraid to put it into circulation."

Prayer Lord Jesus, our Church calls itself a communion of saints. Still, you, who frequented outlaws and prostitutes, along with these young people know it is not free of sinners like us. We are humbled by the graciousness of their trust in us despite our need for purification. May their trust motivate us to join them on the pilgrim road to conversion.

Hymn – PS40

8th Appearance: The Miraculous Catch

"They cast their net and were unable to draw it up for the great number." *John 21:1-17*

Jesus is risen and appears in the miracle of Tor Vergata.

The wholly unexpected crowd at the final vigil and mass was described in the press in maritime images that would have been familiar to the fishermen disciples to whom Jesus appeared, and with whom he shared a Eucharistic meal: "160 nations under a thousand flags flowed together into an impressive sea spread over the double hills of Tor Vergata." "The papal altar looked like an enormous boat anchored in a sea of solidarity." "Contemplating two million young people gathered in contour around a cross illuminated by a forest of torches creates an extraordinary effect."

It was the largest assembly ever organized in Europe. Franco Ferrarotti, dean of Italian sociologists and analyst of mass events during the last 50 years, offers his interpretation: "The pope's Woodstock – that is what some have called this Jubilee of Young People which changed the face of the city, charged by its oceanic proportions and unaccustomed fervor. But the comparison to that American phenomenon of the 60's is a very superficial one. The two situations are exact opposites.

"Woodstock was a spontaneous first act of rebellion against an incrustated and authoritarian society. In contrast, the young people in Rome today are afloat in a society with no more rules, one marked by the absence of ideals and values. They've come here in search of a compass which can re-orient them. They've come in search of a father unlike their own father who camouflages his personal confusion, silence and lack of answers by throwing money, well-being, toys and motorcycles in their direction.

"This gathering of young people is a collective explosion of dissatisfaction, a loud cry of alarm. It is a movement in its embryonic stages. In order to leave a lasting mark, it must translate itself into an organized force with clear objectives which can channel it. ... It is important to note that, besides its purely religious message, the Church has set the rudder to show them the direction: forgiving the debt of third world countries, denunciation of the pure profit motive, attention to the environment, the battle against the death penalty. These issues form the agenda of the young people amassed in unheard-of numbers in Rome."

Prayer

Lord, this illogical concourse of modern youth multiplying one another's enthusiasm for you is the closest thing I have ever experienced to a miracle. But it wasn't a miracle that happened to them; it was a miracle that they made happen. You always told the persons you healed, "Your faith has healed you." Your faith in them awakened their faith in themselves. It was the same with the youth at Tor Vergata. They caught faith through their contact with you, almost as if it were an infection. Thank you for letting it infect me too.

Hymn



9th Appearance: *Baptism*

"Go and baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. I am with you always, until the end of the world." *Matthew 28:16-20*



The Lord is risen and alive in the young through baptism.

The Brazilian boy in the center, foot in the air and arm outstretched, is an image of the resurrection. Ancient icons reserved that exact posture for depictions of the Risen Lord: knee bent upward and one foot ascending, his left hand raised to proclaim the Good News.

The boy's spontaneous configuration to the posture of the resurrection and the sprinkling of water call to mind that the whole World Youth Day program was a week-long renewal of baptism on the part of its young pilgrims. This photo evokes other unintentional symbols of baptism – the sign of the cross and the number three for the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. In renewing their baptism, the youth configured themselves to Christ in more deliberate ways, entering into his silence and his prayer, studying his Word,

following his way of the cross, and living the spirit of service communion which he fostered.

The week was a prolonged catechesis to promote faith in St. Cyril's words, "Everything has been done to you in images because you are images of Christ. Baptized in Christ, you have become configured to the Son of God. As you are predestined to adoption as children, God has configured you to the glorious body of Christ. As you participate in Christ you are justly called Christs."

A pedagogy based on trust requires deep-seated faith that baptism is more than a rite or a symbol, that it is truly efficacious in making young people "children of God in the Son" (Gal 4:5-7), "participants in the nature of God" (2 Peter 1:4), "sharers in the resurrection" (Rom 6:3-4). According to Catholic doctrine, "everything which is truly sin is wiped out by baptism, and God dislikes nothing in those who are born again. The concupiscence which remains in the baptized person is not a sin."

The abundant shower of water hoses was a gratuitous gesture on the part of the city of Rome. Baptism, and our trust in its effect on the young, is also a gratuitous gift. God's love of the young does not depend on their good behavior or on the competences they have mastered. "By grace alone, in faith in Christ's saving work and not because they earn it, ... sinners are justified by the action of the Holy Spirit in baptism", granted the gift of salvation, which lays the basis for the whole Christian life."

Prayer We give you thanks, Father, for decisively conforming young people to your risen Son through baptism, by which you accept them and fill them with your Holy Spirit. By that same Spirit, enable us to trust in your gracious promise and to love young people actively even when the love is not merited.

Hymn

10th Appearance: *The 500*

"He was seen by 500 brothers and sisters at once." 1 *Corinthians* 15:6

The Lord appears to us in young people breaking through individualism.

In reporting that 500 disciples together saw the Lord at one time, Paul is ruling out an interpretation of Jesus' risen appearances as purely subjective visions. The 500 were men and women, most still living when Paul wrote. They were assembled members of several of the first courageous Christian communities, where they served as truthful witnesses of the resurrection. The 500 show that the risen Lord is experienced "when two or three gather," – in the bonds of communion.

The group appearing here is a youthful Franciscan lay community from Chile, as their flag and Tau crosses testify. They take up only one corner of a giant assembly. The picture is, then, a cross-section of the whole week – small, closely knit communities gathered in universal solidarity as an antidote to individualism.



Television audiences witnessed this continuation of Jesus' appearance to the 500. But not everyone believed. A front-page editorial in *La Repubblica* asked, "Are two million young people touring Rome in the Jubilee worth more than the two million crowding Adriatic beaches without crosses and litanies?" The editor was blind to the miracle of communion which distinguished the two populations.

An editorial in another secular paper expresses wonder: "Their orderliness was like oxygen. Many Romans, knowing how capable a young crowd is of provoking a thousand acts of vandalism at a concert or a football game, were amazed that two million youth could come together without creating problems. A corps of 25,000 young men and women volunteers worked at the service of their peers; as a result during the week not even a single flower in a single flowerbed was trampled. Since altruism and solidarity were the common currency, the level of patience was exponentially higher than usual when the inevitable breakdowns happened. The youth days revealed to those who work in the media a hidden world of young people which doesn't make headlines but which is a tremendous resource in our society."

Pope John Paul II, viewing the same reality, saw the Lord: "Through the multi-colored mosaic of your different languages, cultures, customs and ways of thinking, I contemplated the miracle of the universality of the Church, of her catholicity, of her unity. Through you I was able to admire the marvelous coming together of diversity in the unity of the same faith, the same hope, the same love. Here was an eloquent expression of the wondrous reality of the Church, instrument of Christ for the salvation and for unity."

Prayer Lord Jesus, your resurrection confirms that our salvation is not a utopia but a reality. May this enthusiastic gathering of youth of every nation, the fruit of your risen presence among them, give a new impulse to our pastoral work and new hope raised by their eagerness for communion and solidarity.

Hymn

11th Apparition: *James*

"Next he was seen by James."

1 *Corinthians* 15:7



Jesus is risen and appears to us in young people in search.

In the Gospels, responding to the resurrection involves a pilgrimage. James is the apostle renowned for the longest pilgrimage; he set out to proclaim the Good News to the end of the earth, *finis terrae*, now the shrine of Campostella in Spain, site of the first World Youth Day in 1985. Gennaro Ferrara explains why pilgrimage still has a meaning: "We live in a world which has stopped asking itself the most important questions. Pilgrimage for us is a symbol of constantly searching for the ultimate answers."

Journalist Ferruccio Sansa gave the following eyewitness account of the pilgrimage of 2000: "To reach Tor Vergata, the young pilgrims had to get there on foot: 10.5 kilometers (6.5 miles) with the thermometer showing 38° (100° F) and with no shade in sight except that of their own shadows and of their 50-pound backpack. It was a real pilgrimage, especially for youth of the 3rd millennium accustomed to mass transit, motorbikes and personal cars.

"Angela Serini, 80, asked her daughters to help her to the street to 'see the young people.' The most eager ones had long since passed, at 2:00 a.m., 17 hours before the pope's arrival. From then until 5:00 p.m., others went by in a constant stream. During her vigil, Angela saw youth of every imaginable color of skin, eyes, and hair and of every culture, history and language. She witnessed a procession of two hundred thousand lives, two hundred thousand hopes, pains and dreams.

"For a while she thought she was in Africa. Under the copper-colored sun, a group of a hundred African youths wearing traditional colors passed, backpack on their head. Local Romans, attracted by the sound of their drums, greeted them, applauding. And when the youth waved their arms, saying '*Eau...water...por favor*,' buckets rained down from the apartment windows above: one, ten, a hundred. The young pilgrims grew playful, dancing in the street under the cascading *aqua*. Romans splashed around with them, aiming their garden hoses. Luc, age 19, asked 'Where's the shampoo?' Two women called down, 'I hope you brought a hair dryer!' before emptying their pails.

"Later Elise, a French girl in a floral dress, came by looking like she had stepped out of a Monet painting, except for the Nike shoes. She invited Angela: 'Tomorrow we have mass. Are you going to join us?' Then came Angie, 18, of Nebraska, making the journey barefooted. It hurt just to watch her. Then Londoners Jonathan and Constanza, both 15, one with a broken leg and the other a dislocated ankle, managed the uneven asphalt in wheel chair and crutches.

"And so it went for hours: young men, young women, adolescents, singly, in groups. Pilgrims during the Middle Ages had their cross. These had their World Youth Day badge. Watching them, Angela began to say to herself, 'There's something special about these youngsters – and about their songs.' She let her voice be taken by their enthusiasm, admitting to more than a little bit of envy." (August 20)

Prayer of a young pilgrim

"We are in danger of losing ourselves, of loving aimlessly, of failing to meet our expectations, of wasting life along many roads which lead astray. The road we are walking today is the way of the Jubilee. Guide us, O Good Shepherd, on our never-ending spiritual movement in search for what it means to be human and Christian."

Hymn

12th Appearance: *Paul*

"Last of all he was seen by me, as one born out of the normal course.
This favor of his to me has not proved fruitless." *1 Cor 15:6, 10*

The Lord is risen and appears to us in young missionaries and martyrs.

Paul and his gift of sharing his evangelizing mission with those of other races and creeds can be seen in this youthful animator from Senegal. His proclamation of the Good News is oral, aided by a tom-tom and of the hands of someone of a different race.

The international nature of the final Eucharist was expressed through the succession of languages proclaiming the readings and prayers, the sounding forth of four conch shells from Samoa, the dancing of forty Africans as part of the offertory procession, the gathering around the altar of twenty-four young people from all the continents, and the posing of four stones coming from four churches at the extremities of the planet. Paul, missionary to the Gentiles, could never have dreamed of such a culmination to the evangelization of cultures which he started.

The welcome was also universal. Fifty young protestants crossed through the Holy Door and recited a Jubilee prayer. They explained that they came to Rome with 250 Scottish friends 'to express friendship and common faith in Jesus.' Newswoman Maria Louisa Spaziani reported: "In the crowd of youth I ran into a former student of mine from Reggio Calabria, a Jew. We greeted each other warmly. Of course I didn't ask him 'What are you doing here?' It seemed to me altogether natural that a young Jew would want to join in this great concourse of youthful Christianity."

The red scarf around the neck of the Senegalese evangelizer unwittingly evokes Paul's bloody martyrdom by decapitation. A constant theme of the jubilee of young people was the commemoration of the new martyrs such as the youth Charles Lwanga as well as of the protomartyrs – many of them adolescents and young adults, like Agnes, 12, and Agatha, 19 – whose ultimate witness is why early Christians made Rome their center of pilgrimage.

At Tor Vergata, there was a touching "procession of the martyrs" during which each of the two million faces was lit by a terra cotta lamp like those from the Catacombs. Among the faces were those of a clandestine group of young Catholics from the people's Republic of China. One of them, who could not afford to give his name, expressed to journalists that participating made him feel like one of the first Christians who spilled blood to give testimony to their faith.

Prayer "The young people's jubilee told us that, whatever their possible ambiguities, they have a profound longing for those genuine values which find their fullness in Christ. If Christ is presented to young people as he really is, they experience him as an answer that is convincing and they can accept his message, even when it is demanding and bears the mark of the Cross." (John Paul II, *Terzio Millenio Ineunte* 9)

Lord, give us the Holy Father's trust in the fruitfulness of your Word acting in the lives of young people and in its power to respond to the questions in their hearts and to the problems of their world.

Hymn



13th Appearance: *Ascension*

"You are to be my witnesses ... even to the ends of the earth." *Acts 1:8*



The Lord appears to us in the young who accept a vocation as his witnesses.

Jesus is last seen in Acts, where he disappeared from their sight. His appearances have been decisive in restoring the disciples' faith, but now they are over. The only way for future generations to know the resurrection is through a chain of believers who accept special vocations as committed witnesses.

This group of sisters has accepted one such vocation. They represent the adolescents and young adults from all ends of the earth who embrace a celibate vocation in order to keep Jesus in sight between the Ascension and the second coming. They attracted a crowd by giving witness to the joy that is possible during the vigil before the wedding feast which is celibacy. Their dancing in unison says, "Behold how good it is to live together in community."

Federico, in the following account by journalist Cristina Palazzesi, represents thousands of other witnesses among young people who keep the resurrection alive in

married vocations and secular careers:

Palmiro, tall and thin, showed me a picture of Sabrina, his "dream" while waiting for Federico, leader of Palmiro's group from Campobasso.

"It's been 20 years since I've been to Rome. But they convinced me to come. My cousin Federico belongs to a group of very devoted young people. To be truthful, I'm not the kind who goes to mass every Sunday; that isn't the most important thing for me. I believe you can also be Christian through the actions you do and even in the way you smile."

The hymn *Emmanuel* was taken up by the crowd. "These kids know it by heart. Not me; I only learned the refrain in the two days since we left home."

Federico, by now next to him, smiles. He's a very young-looking 29. His eyes sparkle as he speaks of his group: "Nothing that special. We're only young people in search. Myself, for example, I coordinate other young people in the parish and I enjoy belonging to the movement for renewal in the Spirit."

"We get together to say prayers of praise and thanksgiving. And we try to live according to the values of the first Christians. It's not easy to reconcile all of that with the rest of my life. I'm a surveyor and work as much as possible so I can take a few days now and then to cultivate my faith."

Palmiro adds, "In my free time, I prefer dancing, Latin American style."

The piazza sings louder; the pope is arriving. Palmiro, Federico and their group jump to their feet to join the clapping in time to the music. The piazza chants, "What color is God's skin?" and mobilizes flags to answer the question.

"I didn't believe it would happen, but I'm moved," whispers Palmiro, surprised, adding, "These are the kinds of days that put the charge back in you."

Prayer Father, you call these young witnesses, celibate and married, to be the "youthful heart" of the Church and its greatest hope for the new millennium. Give us enough trust in their holiness to call them to special vocations and to entrust into their hands our future and the next watch of the vigil for the definitive coming of Jesus, your Son.

14th Appearance: *He will come again*

"This Jesus who has been taken from you will return. ... Together they devoted themselves to constant prayer. There were some women in their company, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers."
Acts 1:11-14

The Lord is risen and appears to us in young people at prayer.

In the photo of the 13th appearance, a young man in the crowd is pointing, both hands raised against the background of the mountains, to the heavens. It is from there, according to the angels in Acts, that Jesus will return to fulfill the Reign he ushered in.

This present photo offers images of the passing of time: three wristwatches and three ages of youth, representing the three millennia, through which the world has been waiting for the appearance the angels foretold.

The wait is not just chronological. It is biological, psychological and sociological as well as spiritual. Marcello Veneziano's reflection bears it out: "The crowd at Tor Vergata is only the visible tip of an iceberg of a very healthy minority of youth who have spiritual yearnings and who are searching to respond to them in an authentic and meaningful way. But from them can we really conclude that our young people have rediscovered faith? The majority of young people in the West were not spiritually present with those of the jubilee, during which they were elsewhere, dispersed in the search for themselves, stuck in the briars of their own present or that of the little tribe around them. They were surfing the internet or the beach. What does this mean?"

It means we still have a long wait. The fourteen photo – icons of this *Via Lucis* show that the Reign of God has already attracted the young. But not all of them. Partly out of helplessness, partly to make the wait beneficial, the disciples, with Mary and Jesus' family, gathered for prayer.

One way of praying is by song, and the youth of the jubilee were at full voice in the piazzas, in the buses and trams, in the Churches of Rome. But more impressive to me than their sung prayer was the frequent sight, like the one in the picture, of small groups in concentrated prayer. More touching still were the times I encountered individual youths deep in personal prayer during their free time. Often in a solitary corner. Sometimes reading scripture. Or standing quietly in a holy space.

"These kids are ready to leave Rome," mused Vincenzo Consolo on the final day. "They will return to their home towns, but they will leave here behind them a glow of light, like the angels in the writings of Cassian who, before vanishing, released a repeating echo of their song." And of their personal prayer.

Prayer Jesus, you who said that the mystery of the Reign of God is revealed to children and who used a child's word to pray to your Father, we are heartened by young people's trust in prayer. May the beauty that glows in them when they pray dispose us to see their other gifts. Help us to keep vigil in prayer for their peers who are slow to discover their spiritual identity.

Hymn

