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Missionary Prayer Intention - "That children and young people may be messengers of the Gospel and that they may be respected and preserved from all violence and exploitation" - Comment on the Missionary Intention for December 2011

Vatican City (Agenzia Fides) –Since the beginning, the Church has always had a special sensitivity for young people and children. The Lord Jesus urged the apostles to let the children go to Him and urged all his disciples to be like them in order to enter the kingdom of heaven. Also St. John, in his letters, is aimed at the youth, "because you are strong and because the word of God remains in you, and you have conquered the evil one" (1 Jn 2, 14). This sensitivity has been highlighted especially in recent decades, by Blessed Pope John Paul II and by the current Pontiff, through the celebration of World Youth Days. The Church is aware that young people are the hope of the Church and humanity. They are especially entrusted with the task of new evangelization. It is clear that the apostles of the young must be the young people themselves. In his message for the last World Youth Day celebrated in Madrid in August, Pope Benedict XVI told the youth: "Be witnesses of Christian hope throughout the world: there are many who wish to receive this hope!" (Message of 6/8/2010, No.5).
Not infrequently, children suffer multiple forms of exploitation, given their precarious position of weakness and need. Society must recognize their personal dignity, the dignity which belongs to every man as a child of God. When the Word of God assumed our human nature, it was elevated to the highest dignity. Every man is called by God to communion of life with Him. This dignity is inalienable and must always be respected.
The Church, despite the painful experiences that have emerged in recent years, and are an exception, has always been dedicated to defending the weakest, especially children. Pressured by the need to meet basic needs, many children are forced to have to do physical work out of proportion to their age and in inhumane conditions. In some parts of the world, they are sexually exploited and forced into child prostitution. The Church has fought strenuously against these injustices, especially in mission Countries, since it has now been found that often the most developed countries are engaged in the exploitation of the poor. John Paul II had launched an urgent appeal to all authorities of society, to undertake, as a priority, everything in their power to relieve children's pain (cfr.Ecclesia in America, 48).
In many cultures today God’s forgetfulness and a strong spirit of secularism is perceived, which tends to organize society as if God did not exist. Without understanding man as the image of God, human dignity is reduced to a state grant. Faced with this situation, so at odds with the Gospel values and reinforced by the media, one must be brave and not be overcome by difficulties. Benedict told the young people of Malta: "Do not be afraid, but rejoice in his love for you, trust Him, answer his call to discipleship, and find nourishment and spiritual healing in the sacraments of the Church" (Meeting with young people, 18/04/2010).
God wanted to manifest his omnipotence in the paradox of Incarnation. Because he is powerful, he became weak in the Child of Bethlehem. Let us pray so that all members of the Church have confidence in the power of love and have confidence that the strength is manifested in weakness (2 Cor 12: 9). The Church, supported only by the strength of the weakness of her Lord, may then continue to protect children and young people, proclaiming the love God has for them. (Agenzia Fides 30/11/2011)

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