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**Visit of His Eminence Card. Filoni to Uganda**

26-29 October 2017

**Meeting with Children & Youth at Y.E.S. Center**

Friday, 27 October 2017

1. **Introduction**

I am very pleased to meet you, dear children and young people, and I thank you for gathering here this morning. The Holy Father, Pope Francis, sends you his cordial greetings and blessing from Rome. He still has fond memories of his Apostolic Visit to this Nation two years ago, especially as he recalls the warm welcome you gave him on that occasion. On my part, it is a great pleasure to celebrate with you the climax of the Golden Jubilee of the Archdiocese of Kampala. That is in fact the main purpose of my being here. The simple fact of my presence among you, as the Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, is a sign of the closeness and solidarity which the entire Church expresses to you on this occasion of particular happiness. We, Catholics, in fact, belong to one and the same Family of God, the Church. Your joy is our joy and your hope is our hope. Therefore, in these three days I will be in Uganda to rejoice with you and thank God for the many blessings that the People of God in Kampala have received in the past 50 years.

1. **Play an active role in the life of the Church and of your nation!**

Our coming together in this particular moment offers me the opportunity to share with you some thoughts which, I believe, might contribute to orienting your future life and mission. I want first of all to assure you, dear young people, that both the Church and the society have much confidence and hope in you; both are counting on you! You are the present and the future of the Church and of society. The history of the Church in Uganda clearly shows how young people can make a great contribution to the Kingdom of God and to the transformation of society. The Uganda Martyrs were young people like you. You well know that most of them were in their teens and twenties. Regardless of their tender age, they are rightly considered the “foundation stones” of the Church in Uganda.

The divine seed, sown by the first Missionaries, was able to survive and sprout, thanks to those twenty-two young men and boys. What began as a small seed, slowly grew into a big tree, the Catholic Church in Uganda, of which the Archdiocese of Kampala is a cradle. And now this tree is in your hands! It should continue bearing fruit – indeed much fruit. The Missionaries and the Martyrs sowed and nurtured the seed of the Gospel through great toil and self-sacrifice, but most of them did not get to see the results of their labors. You, on the contrary, are the reapers of what they have sown and nurtured through hard work and sacrifice. You are heirs of the work of missionaries and martyrs. You have the sacred duty to continue their work, to be shapers of the present and of the future.

I was happy to know that you, dear young people of the Archdiocese of Kampala, are involved in some way in the work of evangelization through various *Catholic Youth Associations*. I would like to congratulate and thank His Excellency Archbishop Cyprian Kizito Lwanga, along with his collaborators, for having set up such movements which offer a forum for participation in the mission of the Church, especially peer-to-peer evangelization and catechesis. I am referring precisely to *St. Kizito Children’s Association*, the one you call “*Bannakizito*”, (special for Catholic Primary Schools); there is also the *Karolines Youth Association* (for Secondary schools, Tertiary Institutions and Universities), and *the Knights of St. Charles Lwanga* (for Youth professionals). I highly appreciate and recommend these associations and I earnestly invite you, children and young people, to be their active and enthusiastic loyal members. They are excellent forums for personal growth in faith and fraternity, through formation, catechesis, meeting others, learning from them and helping them.

Dear friends, take in hand the development of your local Church and of your country. Always remember that the spiritual future, as well as other aspects of your continent and of this Nation, no longer depend on missionaries or agents of human development from Europe or from other continents. The future of your respective local societies, the future of the Church in Uganda, and that of Africa at large, depends on each of you. You are expected to become agents of moral change within your everyday environment and surroundings. I therefore encourage you to always seek to realize and exercise your full potential. It is possible for Ugandan youth to be innovative, successful and become global icons. Why not? Have faith in yourself! Be inspired by the good example of St. Charles Lwanga who was Spirit filled, courageous and demonstrated leadership skills.

You can have positive impact on society through your commitment to education, hard work and, above all, through the witness of your Christian faith. Education is so important. For that reason, try to make your choices well. Seek always to live a disciplined life and do not give up your commitment to high ideals. On the occasion of the latest *World Youth Day* in Poland, Pope Francis challenged all young people to dream of great things, not to settle for less, not to “throw in the towel”, but to aim high always[[1]](#footnote-1). Therefore, dear young people, do not be content with anything less than the highest ideals!

1. **Vocational discernment**

In order to demonstrate that the Church has interest in you and that she is concerned about you, I wish to remind you that next year, the Synod of Bishops (a meeting which brings together Catholic Bishops from all over the world) will take place in Rome, around the Holy Father, with the purpose of praying and reflecting on how the Church can better encounter, accompany and care for you; on how she can lead you to recognize and accept the call of God to each one of you. One of the topics that will be discussed is, precisely, *vocational discernment*.

By the word “discernment” I mean the process of making a decision about one’s life, with the help of the Holy Spirit. This is the process by which a person makes very important choices in life, for instance the decisions whether to enter married life, or become a priest, or embrace the consecrated life. To discern, therefore, is to discover which one, among various life courses, God wants you to choose. It is the question of listening the voice of God who calls each person for a particular mission and being ready to accept whatever turns out to be God’s plan for you.

Discerning one’s vocation is the task of each person; no one is excluded from making important choices in life. But do not forget to avail yourselves of the assistance of experienced people in listening God’s voice. Perhaps you remember the biblical story of the young Samuel and the holy old man Eli! The help of an experienced person is a valuable support, which would be unwise to disregard.

We should therefore pray always, begging God to help us see what the future holds for us; to see the meaning of life and the direction our own lives should take. The surest path to happiness, dear young men, is to discover what God is inviting you to do in your life and to accept that invitation.

1. **Setting the right priorities in life**

Another thing I would like to advise you is this: make sure you have the right priorities in your life! The sense of failure or of frustration in life proceeds precisely from not having known how to establish the due order and the due priorities in one’s life. You should be able to distinguish interesting and pleasant things on the one hand, from important and indispensable things on the other, even though these latter ones may not be appealing and interesting to you. Today’s many younger people tend to spend much of their time and most of their resources on things that attract their senses, while neglecting those which are objectively important for their life, especially for their future. We have not enough time to fully enjoy things that please us and at the same time fully attend to those which are important in our lives. For this reason, therefore, one has to set priorities – indeed the right priorities. This is usually a challenge; a challenge that may force you to renounce some of those things that you enjoy most but are not the most important ones on the scale of values.

Therefore, I advise you to always ask God for the gift of wisdom, a gift which will enable you to discern correctly, to see what is truly important in life, and to set the right priorities.

Through the intercession of Saints Kizito and Charles Lwanga, your patron Saints, I implore upon you God’s Blessing and wish you all the best for a bright future ahead of you.

Happy Golden Jubilee!

1. Cf. Pope Francis, World Youth Day, Jordan Park, Błonia, Kraków, Thursday, 28 July 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)