



Milan, March 28, 2024

Greeting from Davide Prospero at the beginning of GS Easter Triduum

Dear friends,

it is good to know that you have gathered again in Rimini to live the Easter Triduum together with your friends and leaders. Last year, I lived the whole gesture with you and it was a very important experience for me, a great help to live Easter with even greater awareness of what happened to me so many years ago and that is also offered to you: the grace of being able to live in life—in belonging to this companionship—an exciting friendship with Jesus, Who is alive and present among us. This is why I would like to call you all friends, even those among you whom I have not yet had the opportunity to meet. We are friends because we are on the same journey, drawn by our friendship with Jesus. A friendship filled with promise, the promise of an answer to the desires of our hearts. Desires for good, for beauty, for love. How can some of you say you do not have these desires, especially at your age? Yet so many times, and I can assure you this happens often to us adults as well, we end up stunning them by seeking satisfaction in small and trivial things.

In our affections, studies, sports, passions, in the music we listen to or the books we read: from all of this, which is then life, there always transpires a promise that gives us the impetus to face our day. But then we seem unable to keep this promise; we remain dissatisfied and fall back on ourselves. We end up being crushed by difficulties and by our limitations. And so we settle, because disappointment and sadness take the wind out of our sails, leave us hopeless. But hope is always there, as Aragorn says in that wonderful scene in the film based on the novel *The Lord of the Rings* by J.R.R. Tolkien, when a scanty group of men locked up at Helm's Deep is besieged by orcs, disproportionately outnumbered (because often fatigue or evil seem unbeatable). With inconsolable despair and holding a sword all crumpled and creased, a young boy says stammering to Aragorn, "They say there is no more hope." But Aragorn grabs his sword from him, takes two swings in the air, gives it back to him, and asks, "What is your name?" (for we need someone who reminds us who we are, where we come from!). And the boy replies, "Haleth, son of Háma, my lord." And Aragorn replies, "Haleth, son of Háma, this is a good sword. There is always hope!" There is always hope, even if we have a small, crumpled sword. We don't realize this but we have the weapons, albeit wretched and fragile, that help us face things with hope without being brought down by our feeling wrong, inapt, or betrayed in our feelings.

A few days ago, I was invited to speak about Giacomo Leopardi in Recanati, his hometown—Fr. Fabio accompanied me, he can testify to that—and about the love Fr. Giussani felt for this poet. The older among you may be studying Leopardi these very months. Leopardi was one who was not satisfied with life. He was certainly disappointed with reality, hopeless, even more so as the years went by. And his disappointment seemed even more tragic to him because he had much longed for happiness from his early youth, "No hope of seeing you alive / remains for me now" (he writes in the poem *To His Lady*; verses 12–13. *Canti*, Farrar Straus Giroux, 2010, trans. Jonathan Galassi). But

somehow he could not help but grasp that promise that life holds; that is why, until the end, he kept on pining for that cry for happiness—what the heart of every human person asks for. I suppose many of you know the poem *Night Song of a Wandering Shepherd in Asia* (*ibid*, verses 84–89):

“[...] or when I see the stars burn up in heaven,
I ask myself:
Why all these lights?
What does the endless air do, and that deep
eternal blue? What is the meaning of
this huge solitude? And what am I?”

I would have been in despair no less than this poet, and I could not make this wish for you today, if I had not met a friend, some friends, a companionship that showed me that the way to the answer to this cry is there, and that the answer to our question is not an eternal Idea, as Leopardi perhaps thought, but a Presence that takes on the face of a friendship. Here, our weapon—which Leopardi did not have the grace to receive but which you have received—our hope is our friendship with Jesus! It is this friendship that opens us to everything, that opens us to what is true, to know what is true (and therefore also of what is false, that is, to understand what is good and what is bad), to really savor what we like. To savor the endless air and also that sense of immense solitude of which Leopardi speaks. Nothing is lost: Christ’s friendship reconciles us not in the sense that we have to give up what we love, but rather we learn to really love, thus becoming truly free. Even to take risks. Jesus promises us happiness, and this friendship of ours is for happiness! We are interested in happiness, and nothing less.

How does Jesus come to meet us? How does this new life—a life enlightened by faith—spring forth? You will delve into these things during these days, among yourselves, together with Seve and Fr. Fabio (please pray for them, that Our Lady will enlighten their hearts and minds during these days!) and with the adults who are with you, whose friendship is a sign of Christ’s friendship.

One last thing, lest these words we are saying sound empty to you: what is this friendship with Jesus? Jesus reveals to us God’s good plan for the world and our lives, He communicates to us what the Father revealed to Him to the point of giving His life for it; for He desires that we have the same willingness He has. As it should always be among true friends: He wants us to desire what He desires, and not to desire what He does not desire. It sounds like a tongue twister, but it is a grand thing, breathtaking to think about. The Latins used to say: *idem velle, idem nolle* (same desires, same dislikes). This is true friendship. Jesus asks us to imitate Him in everything. As the evangelist John reminds us, “If I, therefore, the master and the teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another’s feet. I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do” (*John* 13:14–15). Isn’t it fascinating to be able to experience such friendship among ourselves? Isn’t it something out of this world?

I wish you may always look at each other this way, to continue this journey together, in these days and throughout your lives. And through your lives, many may encounter this same friendship of Jesus. For His companionship never tires.

Happy Triduum!

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