

Pope: The Church hears the outrage of young people at scandal

Pope Francis said in Estonia Tuesday he is aware of the negative feelings many young people have toward the Catholic Church and their disappointment in a lack of clear denunciation of sexual scandals.

Young people are outraged “by sexual and economic scandals that do not meet with clear condemnation,” he said Sept. 25, and by the Church’s “unpreparedness to really appreciate the lives and sensibilities of the young,” assigning them passive roles.

Addressing youth at an ecumenical gathering in Kaarli Lutheran Church in Tallinn, he said the Church knows “that many young people do not turn to us for anything because they don’t feel we have anything meaningful to say to them.”

He pointed to the *Instrumentum Laboris* [of the upcoming Synod](#) and what it says young people want from the Church. He said the Church has heard these complaints and wants to be a “transparent, welcoming, honest” community.

Francis met youth on the final day of a four-day trip to the three Baltic states. In Estonia, more than 50 percent of the population of 1.3 million identify as non-religious. Eastern Orthodox make up about 16 percent and the Lutheran church 10 percent. According to recent estimates, there are only around 5,000 Catholics in Estonia.

Every religion at times finds it easier to talk than to listen and be challenged by what young people are experiencing, he said. “Today, I am here to tell you that we want to mourn with you when you mourn, to accompany and support you, to share in your joys, and to help you to be followers of the Lord.”

He urged young people to be fearless and to not believe the messages that say love is dead. “Jesus is still the reason for our being here,” he stated. “We know no greater peace of mind can be found than by letting Jesus carry our burdens.”

“We are united by our faith in Jesus, and he is waiting for us to bring him to all those young people whose lives are no longer meaningful. Let us accept together that newness that God brings to our life, that newness that impels us to set out anew to all those places where humanity is most wounded,” he encouraged.

Before meeting with youth, Francis addressed Estonia’s president, civil authorities, and diplomatic corps, highlighting the fact that in the Middle Ages, the area was called the “Terra Mariana,” or “Land of Mary.”

This name, he said, is “not simply a part of your history, but also part of your culture,” and like Mary, the land recalls ideas of memory and fruitfulness.

The pope also reflected on the use of technology and warned against placing too much “trust” in technological progress, which can erode the capacity for “interpersonal, intergenerational and intercultural bonds.”

Consequently, building these bonds is one of the most important obligations; and for those who have power in the political, social, educational, and religious spheres, there is a responsibility to combat alienation and foster community and a sense of belonging, he said in a CNA report.

“In this effort, dear friends, I wish to assure you that you can count always on the support and help of Catholic Church, a small community in your midst, yet one most desirous of contributing to the fruitfulness of this land.”