

INTERVENTION BY S.E.R. ANTHONY FISHER OP

Today in your presence, Holy Father, and amidst my brother bishops, I want to say sorry to young people for all the ways we've failed them.

For the shameful deeds of some priests, religious and lay people, perpetrated upon you or other young people just like you, and the terrible damage that has done; and for the failure of too many bishops and others to respond appropriately when abuse was identified, and to do all in their power to keep you safe; and for the damage thus done to the Church's credibility and to your trust (IL 59 and 66): I apologize.

For the times Catholic families, parishes and schools have failed to introduce you to the person of Jesus Christ, his saving word, and his plan for your life; and for the times we've seemed to you unwelcoming, distant or harsh, or have not demonstrated the sheer joy of being Christians; and for the times when you were searching for your sexual, ethnic or spiritual identity, and needed a moral compass, but found Church people unsympathetic or ambiguous: I apologize.

For when we've sold you short not encouraging you to live heroically your baptismal call to holiness and the paschal path to life through self-renunciation; or when we've provided too little youth ministry or other support, so you've found living as a young person of faith and ideals lonely in a secular, often cynical world; or when unbeautiful or unwelcoming liturgies have failed to inspire or include you, and when you've been denied the Church's treasury of examination of conscience, reconciliation, adoration, pilgrimages, penances and devotions: I apologize.

For poor preaching, catechesis or spiritual direction that fails to convert, and for lack of imagination or enthusiasm for that new evangelization to which the recent popes have called us; and for our failures to demonstrate God's mercy, as Pope Francis has insisted we must, and to involve you in campaigns for Christ-centred justice and in works of mercy; and for families, dioceses and religious orders that with a contraceptive mentality have given up on generating new vocations and so have not nurtured yours: I apologize.

To any young person we have let down in these or other ways: from the bottom of my heart I apologize to you. And to the Lord I pray: Kyrie eleison.

But I say to young people also: never give up on Jesus because of our failures. Never give up on the Church that you can help make more faithful. Never give up on the world that, with Christ and the Church's help, you can make a better place.

In **Jesus Christ**, the Ancient of Days is made young – for you. The Creator of this beautiful universe comes close to your life to save you. He calls you to ‘come, follow’ him and become his young disciple. He sends you out as a missionary to our world. You can be a hero, for nothing is so exciting as the adventure of the Gospel!

So: when you are lost and need direction, know that the young Jesus is the eternal Way for you! When you are confused and need sound teaching, know that the young Jesus is the eternal Truth for you! When you are searching for the vocation that will most fulfil you, know that the young Jesus is eternal Life for you!

In the presence of the Holy Father and amidst my brother bishops, I recommit myself to young people and to drawing them closer to Christ who is always there for them.

