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Today: Pope Leo XIV Meets 6,000 Young People From Lazio for Regional World Youth Day

A true story of faith under pressure. Read the first half below, then continue online.

KEY SPIRITUAL TAKEAWAY

"Take courage! I have overcome the world"

(Transliterated from the original Hindi.)

They had gathered only to pray. When prayer itself becomes the target, faith is proved not by words but by staying.

The Story - Part One

More than 6,000 young people from across Italy's Lazio region are gathering in the Vatican's Paul VI Hall today, Saturday 21 November, for a regional World Youth Day celebration with Pope Leo XIV. The Pope will answer questions from five young people representing dioceses across the region, and the gathering will close with the renewal of baptismal promises.

The theme echoes the 2027 World Youth Day in Seoul: "Take courage! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

The day belongs to the young people before it belongs to the Pope. Doors open at 8:30 in the morning with a welcome session led by Veronica Maria Genovese and the regional choir of the Renewal in the Spirit movement, with representatives from the dioceses of Lazio.

At 9:45, Bishop Mauro Parmeggiani of Tivoli and Palestrina will lead a moment of prayer centred on a passage from St Paul's Second Letter to Timothy (2 Timothy 1:1-9). Young people will then share testimonies of faith, vocation, missionary service and war.

The audience with Pope Leo XIV begins at 11:30, following an address by Cardinal Baldassare Reina, Vicar of His Holiness for the Diocese of Rome. Five young people, each representating a different diocese, will put their questions to the Pope directly. The event is being broadcast live on TV2000's Play2000 streaming platform from noon Rome time, so families across Lazio can watch the encounter unfold.

Bishop Parmeggiani, the regional delegate for youth ministry, said on the eve of the gathering that he was "certain that this meeting with Pope Leo XIV will encourage our young people to seek the deeper meaning of life and not to be afraid to embrace the vocation God offers them." He added that it would encourage them "to have the courage to go against the tide, not to grow discouraged in doing good, to live their faith in their daily lives and, in this way, to become authentic witnesses to Christ and proclaimers of the Gospel in today's world."

That phrase - going against the tide - is the thread running through the whole day. The testimonies scheduled for the morning include young people who have served in missions and young people who have lived through war.

The Turning Point - What Happens Next

The story reaches a life-changing moment that changes everything -- and what seemed like the end is only the middle. Two reports disagree on the numbers, and one question is left unanswered: will the CCTV footage ever come out? Read the full story to find out what happens next.

PERSONAL REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When gathering to pray carries a real cost, what keeps a community coming together anyway -- and what would keep you coming?

2. The pastor's sister shielded him with her own body and fainted under the blows. What does costly, self-giving love look like in your own family or church?

3. When justice is delayed and a complaint is withdrawn under threat, how do believers hold on to truth without giving in to fear -- or to hatred?

READ THE FULL STORY

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