

**ARCHPASTORAL GREETINGS**  
**To the Participants of My Life in Christ Youth Conference**  
San Francisco, CA – July 15-21, 2013

Dearest Beloved,

When I was young like you, I always asked the question: "Why does everyone, everywhere constantly remark about how, and why and what I do?"

Now, at age of 71, I have an answer why so many people take notice of you and your actions as teenagers and young-adults.

One reason is that your time of life is precious. You are no longer children, and you are not yet fully independent adults. It is a time when you are very receptive to ideas and direction. As you grow older, more people will exert their influence on you: teachers, employers, priests, bishops, parents, and lovers. Teen and young adulthood is a very personal period of time when you can freely choose and make things your own, things that in the future will reveal your personality and character.

Since it is such an intensely personal time, it is precious to the Holy Spirit, too. The Holy Spirit works in and with each one of you as you are – individuals, different from others and truly unique. Although the Spirit labors separately with each of you, He draws you together by His presence in others.

The following prayer is said at nearly all church services. It is one that you can say yourself privately at any time, and it is a prayer that can become a young adult's code of commitment: "Heavenly King, Comforter and Spirit of Truth, Who are everywhere and fulfilling all things; Treasury of blessings and Giver of life: come and abide in us; cleanse us of every impurity and save our souls, O Good One."

We all follow leaders. Some of us have a hero-leader, others have a gang-leader. As Orthodox Christians our leader is God. Our Lord Jesus Christ sent the Holy Spirit to be with us, and we call Him our Leader, our King. Since He is not elected, nor is He an hereditary leader, He really belongs to everyone. He is not limited to nationalities by being ABC - an American, a Bulgarian, or a Canadian. He belongs from A to Z – to everyone – because He is from Heaven.

Often during teen and young-adults years, tears flow: misunderstandings, accusations and indifference towards you come. The Holy Spirit is the Comforter, Who really knows about injustices. He also knows you and when you are negligent and how to guide you without forcing you or threatening you. What a great Friend... a true Friend, Who can and does understand and comfort!

Everyone has known someone who has said that he was telling you the truth, but who led you astray with a lie. When troubles came because of it, he left you all alone. How alone and how abandoned we felt then, ... not knowing what was true and what false! Truth is something that

God alone knows completely. A human being may know some things, but we depend upon God to reveal and guide us to the fullness of truth. Whenever you are in doubt about someone or something, call upon the Spirit of Truth to enlighten and guide you.

Even on the darkest, moonless night, when you are in your room and the door is closed, or when you are walking through the fields and see no one for miles around, God is present. And, He is likewise present in the largest, pushiest crowd of shoppers and among the noisiest spectators in every sports stadium. God is everywhere, because He created and keeps everything going. We must be careful not to ignore Him or not to "see" Him and then turn away from Him. Unless God is with us, we are not fully ourselves. Just as an electrical appliance does not work if it is not plugged into an electrical circuit, so we are not really totally ourselves unless we are connected with God. He is the beginning and the end for us. He fills us with those good things that we lack and for which we pray.

If you wish to borrow something, you must go to the person who has what you want: to a bank for money, to a friend for a music album, to your parents for help and for the wisdom of their experience. But each of these sources have just so much to give and that's all. The Holy Spirit has all blessings, earthly and heavenly, and gives them abundantly to all who ask. There is nothing which does not ultimately come from God: good health, love for others and even trials and crosses to bear. God is called a treasury of good gifts, because all blessings and every perfect gift, and all treasures come from Him.

God is also called the Giver of life, because all existence and movement begin and end with Him.

After having called upon the Holy Spirit and made an act of faith in Him as King, Comforter and Giver of life, we commit ourselves to Him and ask Him to come and stay with us, not to leave us to ourselves and to our selfish ways. If God is among us, we can be sure that all will go well. As a promise to Him as our King, an offering for His coming, we ask Him to purify us of our bad habits, our narrow way of thinking and from all forms of self-interest.

Finally, we ask Him to save our souls. This is another way of saying: "Save me, Lord: my body, my mind, my heart and my all – so that I may do Your will and will not be afraid to stand up and be counted among those who love and serve You."

And because we know that God will give us whatever is necessary and useful for us if we ask for it and sincerely try to fulfill His will, we call Him the Good One.

Say this prayer daily, even hourly. On the bus, as you walk, in school, at work, at home and everywhere, pray to the Holy Spirit and make sure that you are receptive to Him.

May the Holy Spirit be with you always!

Have a blessed Diocesan Youth Conference!

With love in the Lord,

+ Metropolitan JOSEPH