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## Pope Francis: “All together in Lisbon! A new beginning for the young and for humanity”

“I hope and I firmly believe that the experience many of you will have in Lisbon next August will represent a new beginning for you, the young, and – with you – for humanity as a whole”: these are the opening lines of the Pope’s Message for the XXXVII World Youth Day, sent out to young men and women worldwide. The WYD will be celebrated in particular Churches on November 20 next and at international level from August 1 to 6, 2023 in Lisbon with the theme “Mary arose and went with haste” (Lk 1:39). “In these troubling times, when our human family, already tested by the trauma of the pandemic, is racked by the tragedy of war, Mary shows to all of us, and especially to you, young people like herself, the path of proximity and encounter”, Francis writes in the Message, which highlights a verb in particular – to arise – whose meaning includes that of “waking up to the life all around us.” After the Annunciation, “Mary could have focused on herself and her own worries and fears about her new condition. Instead – writes the Pope - she arises and sets out, for she is certain that God’s plan is the best plan for her life.” Thus “Mary becomes a temple of God, an image of the pilgrim Church, a Church that goes forth for service, a Church that brings the good news to all!”. Mary in particular “is a model for young people on the move, who refuse to stand in front of a mirror to contemplate themselves or to get caught up in the “net”. Mary’s focus is always directed outwards. She is the woman of Easter, in a permanent state of exodus, going forth from herself towards that great Other who is God and towards others, her brothers and sisters, especially those in greatest need.” “Each of you can ask: ‘How do I react to the needs that I see all around me? Do I think immediately of some reason not to get involved? Or do I show interest and willingness to help?’, is Francis’ question to young people. “To be sure, you cannot resolve all the problems of the world – remarks the Pope - Yet you can begin with the problems of those closest to you, with the needs of your own community”, following the example of Mother Teresa.

“When faced with concrete and urgent needs, we need to act quickly”,

Francis points out: “How many people in our world look forward to a visit from someone who is concerned about them! How many of the elderly, the sick, the imprisoned and refugees have need of a look of sympathy, a visit from a brother or sister who scales the walls of indifference! What kinds of “haste” do you have, dear young people? What leads you to feel a need to get up and go, lest you end up standing still? Many people – in the wake of realities like the pandemic, war, forced migration, poverty, violence and climate disasters – are asking themselves: Why is this happening to me? Why me? And why now? But the real question in life is instead: for whom am I living? The haste of the young woman of Nazareth is the haste of those capable of putting other people’s needs above their own.” “Mary is an example of a young person who wastes no time on seeking attention or the approval of others – as often happens when we depend on our ‘likes’ on social media. She sets out to find the most genuine of all “connections”: the one that comes from encounter, sharing, love and service”, Francis goes on to note: “How many testimonies have we heard from people who were “visited” by Mary, the Mother of Jesus and our Mother! In how many far-off places of the earth, in every age – through apparitions and special graces – has Mary visited her people! There is practically no place on earth that she has not visited.” **A “healthy haste”, points out the Pope, “drives us always upwards and towards others.” Yet there is also an “unhealthy haste**, which can drive us to live superficially and to take everything lightly. Without commitment or concern, without investing ourselves in what we do. It is the haste of those who live, study, work and socialize without any real personal investment.” “This can happen in interpersonal relationships – argues the Pope -. In families, when we never stop to listen and spend time with others. In friendships, when we expect our friends to keep us entertained and fulfil our needs, but immediately look the other way if we see that

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they are troubled and need our time and help. Even among couples in love, few have the patience to really get to know and understand each other. We can have the same attitude in school, at work and in other areas of our daily lives. When things are done in haste, they tend not to be fruitful. They risk remaining barren and lifeless.” **In the final part of the message**, Francis returns to highlight the importance of dialogue between generations: “to bridge distances – between generations, social classes, ethnic and other groups – and even put an end to wars.” “It is no coincidence that war is returning to Europe at a time when the generation that experienced it in the last century is dying out,” is the Pope’s analysis: “We need the covenant between young and old, lest we forget the lessons of history; we need to overcome all the forms of polarization and extremism present in today’s world.”

“All together to Lisbon!

next August, is the Pope’s final invitation, with a quotation from a prayer by Don Tonino Bello: “Holy Mary..., we know very well that you were destined to sail the ocean deep. If we beg you to hug the coast, it is not because we want to hold you back, but because, seeing your closeness to the shores of our discouragement, we come to see that we too are called to venture out, as you did, upon the high seas of freedom.”

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