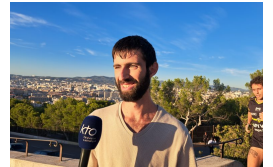

Seventy young people in Marseille: “We don't want to list the problems, we want to create pathways for hope”

(from Marseille) They “set to work” already last Monday, in anticipation of the arrival of the bishops and Pope Francis. Seventy young men and women, aged between 25 and 30, of all faiths, religions and countries, representing the Mediterranean in all its diversity. They came from Morocco, Algeria, the Holy Land, they belong to non-Catholic Christian denominations, among them Muslims and Jews. They have come to Marseille to reflect together on the challenges and resources of the Mediterranean region and to share their thoughts and experiences. The Mediterranean meetings taking place in Marseille on 17-24 September also bear their face. There is no pre-determined project or document, but rather a packed programme of visits, meetings, reflections, debates - listening and speaking. Discussions will focus on the challenges encountered at Sea, as well as the expectations for a “better world to live in”: migration and the images from the island of Lampedusa, which has become a destination for so many young people arriving from African countries; the conflict in Ukraine and the millions of war refugees who have fled to Europe in search of a safe haven; multiculturalism and the fear of our fellow “others”; climate change and the natural disasters that have hit several countries hard in recent months. The floods in Italy, the tragedy in Libya, the wildfires in Greece. These are the challenges that “the young people of Marseille” are tackling.



[from Marseille. “We have come from different countries and the different contributions highlight the different challenges,” says Thomas. “But the idea is not so much to come up with a programme or a political proposal, but rather a vision of a better world that can serve as a basis for concrete projects. The young people will express their expectations and exchange views with the Bishops from the Mediterranean countries who will join them in Marseille on Thursday. They will then present Pope Francis with a summary and a document on their proceedings. We expect religious leaders to open paths of hope,” said the young man from France, “a willingness to open as many doors as possible, the courage to think differently, but above all the boldness to go off the beaten track. Dvir Warshavsky is a 28-year-old young Jew from Jerusalem. He too mentions the need to open up spaces of fraternity and inclusion, to educate in justice and “care for others and for nature”, and to be open to interaction. “I’m not interested in knowing what I already know, I’m interested in listening to what the other person has to share and be inspired by their contribution.”](#)



. Vicar General of the Archdiocese, "where they experienced first-hand the importance of the art of dialogue in a city. "The main message is the importance of getting to know our fellow human beings, of putting aside prejudices, of becoming aware of our own ignorance in order to listen to and discover those other than ourselves. This is the adventure we wanted young people to experience, because we firmly believe that only if the Mediterranean becomes an area of interaction can it be a message of hope and peace for all". Religions too have a central role to play. "But it is important to understand that they are not a threat. On the contrary, they are an opportunity for us to discover that pluralism, far from being an obstacle to peace in the Mediterranean, is one of its greatest resources."



"They are at the centre of their reflections," said Father Leproux. A moment of remembrance for the victims at sea will be held with Pope Francis. "There will be a moment of remembrance not only for the migrants, but also for the workers and seafarers whose lives are often at risk because of the work they do. Each of these people has a unique face and a unique story. We mourn each and every one of them. Here too, fears must be overcome. Migrants are not a threat, they are people reaching out and asking for our help. We cannot abandon them in the middle of the sea and turn a blind eye."

M. Chiara Biagioni