

From Panama to Lisbon - Called to Missionary Synodality
International Meeting online, 18 - 22 November 2020

Words of greeting to the participants

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Good afternoon, or good morning or good evening, depending on the time zone you happen to be in at this moment. I want to welcome you all to this very important meeting that brings us together today. We may attend many meetings, but I assure you all that this particular meeting is of great importance to the world of youth and to the world of the Church.

I want to thank above all Archbishop José Ulloa of Panama City for his hard work together with all the bishops of Central America who participated in making the World Youth Day encounter such a fruitful event. I also wish to thank the Patriarch of Lisbon, Cardinal Clemente, as Lisbon will host the next international World Youth Day.

We meet today thanks to the great gift of social media. Were it not for that we might have met here in Rome; however, we live at a time that is quite tragic in many ways. It is a new phase in the history of our world, and in the history of the Church, and in the life of each one of us here today. The pandemic has certainly changed our lives. It has changed the way we think and act, and the world as we knew it in the past no longer exists. We suffer because of “lockdowns” or “shutdowns” or whatever it is called where you are. Yet it affects us all. We can no longer get together or speak to each other directly. We can no longer have gatherings. Churches are closed and the sacraments are not regularly available. People feel lonely, lost and afraid. We ask the Holy Spirit today for the fortitude to continue with our lives. For all of us this is an opportunity to start off anew.

We thank God for the great gift of WYD in Panama. Now we turn our focus to Lisbon. I say that this is an important event today because it is in preparation for a new stage in the life of the Church that will change the Church and change the world we live in. It is a time of opportunity for young people. I would hope that each of us will strive to the best of our abilities to bring back that great spirit of fraternity we experienced in Panama and at the Synod of young people. Once

again we are called to reactivate and renew the world of youth ministry. People ask me many times what is going to make it different. It is up to us. It is we who have to change. We are the ones who have to look forward to Lisbon as a new beginning. New wine in new wineskins. That is what we are called to do today. We need to dream dreams that never were... live the joy of the Gospel.

I look back to when Pope Francis was elected. It was certainly a prophetic moment in the life of the Church. We think of how Pope Francis has been preparing young people in the Church for the present moment. He published the apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, the joy of the Gospel, and he taught us a way of listening to Jesus Christ and to living the reality of Jesus Christ in our own lives each day. This is the joy that we need to bring back to our world once again.

Later he convened a synod of young people. The first ever synod dedicated to young people. I recall what happened in the synod hall, a place where bishops do the talking. The young people made their voices heard – whether legally or illegally according to the rules of the synod. Their voices were heard and Pope Francis was more interested in what they had to say. That is why he wrote the exhortation after the synod, *Christus Vivit*. Christ lives in our world today. In it he speaks of how Christ lives and what Christ wants us to do.

Finally, he recently wrote an encyclical letter to the whole world, *Fratelli Tutti*. We are all brothers and sisters, and the great lesson we have to learn is that we must all live according to the Gospel, no matter who we are. Jesus did not care if people were Samaritans or of Jewish faith, believers or pagans, Romans or non-Romans. For Jesus, they were all human persons. This is the message that Pope Francis sends to us today.

Approximately two years ago, Pope Francis decided on the theme for this year's World Youth Day, "Young man, I say to you, arise!" (Luke 7:14), the important word is: *Arise!* These are the words that we address to you today. We have to show the world that we are alive, that we are full of the peace and joy of understanding and living according to the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This is what World Youth Day is all about. So many of us have experienced the joy and sensation of closeness to God and to each other during World Youth Day.

Let us focus on Lisbon. Let us give thanks to God for Panama. Let us now begin again. The youth of the world must come together once again and let the world know. Remember, we have been in lockdown for nearly a year. It will take

another year and maybe longer. Lisbon will be the moment when the world and the Church come back to life again. We must be those missionary disciples that once again instil in the world the great spirit of Christ himself.

I thank you all for expressing your ideas, for analysing what has gone on in the past, and for looking forward to the future. Please God we will all meet again in Lisbon for the universal World Youth Day. It is so urgently needed for the life of the Church. Let us ask the Holy Spirit to guide us and prepare us all for that great moment. Thank you, and may God bless you all.