

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

**Concluding words**

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Before I forget, I would like to begin by **thanking** all those who made this real-virtual meeting possible. It was a great challenge for us, given that it is the first time that we have held a whole conference online. I am grateful to the technicians and translators for their competence. Thank you to the volunteer Wallace and to the staff of the Dicastery, especially those in the youth office (Fr. João, Giovanna and Dorota), those in administration (Paola Canu and Luis), in communications (Vittorio and Lorena) and in reception (Barbara and Luca). Thank you also to all those who prepared the beautiful prayers and to the coordinators of the working groups. A round of applause for them all.

To conclude this meeting is to reach **one more milestone in the synodal journey as we take one more step together**. All that we have been doing during these four days of meetings is part of the synodal journey. The Pope thought of WYD in Panama as being part of the synodal journey and WYD in Lisbon will be too. Between the two WYDs we were surprised by an unusual happening which is the Covid-19 pandemic, something that is changing the face of the world and the Church. This too is part of the synodal journey.

As Cardinal Farrell reminded us at the beginning of our meeting, we are starting a **new phase** in the life of the world. What will be different, how will the world be different, what will change in the Church? That depends on us. It depends especially on young people. They are the “now of God”, and they are being called to live this time in a spirit of missionary synodality. **Lisbon 2023 must be a framework, a new beginning** for youth ministry, the Prefect told us.

At this meeting we were able to **give thanks** from the heart, once again, for all that the Church in **Panama** has done to give such a warm welcome to WYD. It was a WYD of the peripheries and of outreach; it was Marian, Central American with a Latin American and Caribbean flavour, and it was interreligious, as Bishop Ulloa said. We are grateful for all the **testimonies and suggestions** given to help improve the preliminary preparation at the local level, the Days in the Dioceses and WYD itself. We will read again all the comments of the groups that are recorded in the presentations they gave us, and we will take them all into account. Moreover, now that we have discovered this means of communication, we hope that we will be able to meet more frequently online – and perhaps also in person – before the next WYD.

In fact, as youth ministers throughout the world, we are more connected than ever! We recently launched our **virtual platform** “SynAct - Synod in action”. Let us make it a real communication channel as **the world moves into the virtual**. That was beyond our imagination when we were creating it. It is certainly providential that we have it now for our ordinary work.

On the first day of the meeting we saw the creativity and commitment of young people in these difficult times, as Sr Alessandra Smerilli reminded us. I am always surprised and amazed by the efficiency, imagination, teamwork and dedication of young people. An example close to the Dicastery is the **International Youth Advisory Body**.

As agents of youth ministry, our mission is to listen to young people, to accompany them and to leave space for them to take the lead. The **way to go** at this time is **missionary synodality**, and this is another very providential aspect. The Youth Synod happened at the right time. God intended it for that moment in history!

Let me explain. Young people awakened the synodality of the Church, and we said this so many times during the synodal process. But why? Why now? It was so that the Church could respond in a synodal way to the challenges of post-pandemic times. In times of crisis **we are together in the same canoe** (said by a young synod speaker and repeated by the Pope in *Christus Vivit*). We are in the same boat and the “outcome”, that is, the overcoming of the storm and the arrival in a safe port, can only be synodal. I repeat: young people awakened the synodality of the Church so that the Church would respond in a synodal way – with the young and perhaps even guided by them – to the challenges of our times.

We are grateful to Sr Nathalie and for all the contributions – including from group work – that helped us to delve deeper into the meaning of missionary synodality and how to live it in practice. We are grateful for the suggestions they gave us for a type of synodal youth ministry shaped by synodal spirituality. We still have a long way to go. The good news is that we want it and we will do it together!

“Young man, I say to you, arise!” is the theme for WYD 2020. Beginning from next year, the Holy Father wants to give new impetus to the diocesan and regional celebrations of the local WYD. The Dicastery will give some instructions on this in the coming weeks. **“Stand up. I appoint you as a witness of what you have seen”** will be the theme for WYD 2021. What a suitable theme it is for the times we are living in. The Church and society are very much affected at this time (activities, sacraments and gatherings are reduced to a minimum). Young people have to draw the Church out of the catacombs after the pandemic. Stand up, all you young people! Arise, Church! Wake up, world! Cardinal Farrell said a phrase that struck me as being prophetic: “Lisbon will be the moment when the world will come back to life!”

Thank you, **young people of Portugal**, and thank you, Church of Portugal, for taking up the challenge of preparing this world youth pilgrimage. It is a missionary festival that bears witness to the faith, missionary energy, solidarity, generosity and dynamism of young people

throughout the world. Christ lives and wants us to live especially at this time. Together, in a synodal way, we are starting on our journey towards Lisbon 2023.

May Mother Mary, Our Lady of Fatima, on this day when the Church celebrates her presentation in the temple – we are celebrating the consecration of her life to God's promises for humanity when she embraces her mission in life – **teach us to "arise"** with missionary enthusiasm and to set out, without delay, towards the future which God entrusts to the young people of today. They are God's 'now'. Hail Mary...