

HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE
OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE



BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIEGE
PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS

BOLLETTINO

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N. 230828e

Saturday 26.08.2023

Video meeting with young Russians gathered in Saint Petersburg, on the occasion of the 10th National Meeting of Young Catholics of Russia (23 to 27 August)

Yesterday afternoon, the Holy Father Francis connected with young Russians gathered in Saint Petersburg on the occasion of the tenth National Meeting of Young Catholics in Russia, taking place from 23 to 27 August. The theme chosen for this tenth meeting is the same as that of World Youth Day in Lisbon: "Mary arose and went in haste" (Lk 1:39).

The following is the address delivered to them by the Pope during the meeting:

Address of the Holy Father

Dear young people, may the peace and joy of Jesus be with you!

Three weeks ago, we celebrated World Youth Day in Lisbon, with young people from all around the world. Today I feel a great joy at being here to share with you this moment of faith and hope. The motto of this World Youth Day was: "Mary arose and went in haste" (Lk 1:39). I would like to propose three ideas to you, based on this motto, so that you can work on them further, in a reflection you can carry out as a group, each one according to his or her own experience.

First idea: *God calls, and is outbound.* We are all chosen and called. Each one of you, like Mary, is called by God. Yes, called by God, chosen and called. We are all chosen and called. Ask yourselves: Am I chosen? Yes, the Lord has called to you from the beginning of your life, He called you by name! Called before the talents we have, before our merits, before our obscurities and wounds; before everything, we were called. Called by name, one by one. God does not go to the pile, God goes one by one.

Elizabeth, who was barren, and Mary, the virgin: two women who became witnesses, of what? Of the transforming power of God. God transforms. It is this experience of God's overflowing love that cannot but be shared. This is why Mary arose and set out without hesitation, immediately. She had to get up quickly. When

God calls, we cannot remain seated. We must go in haste, because the world, the brother, the suffering, he who is next to us, who does not know the hope of God, needs to receive it, needs to receive the joy of God. I get up in haste to bring the joy of God. This is the first idea: we are called and outbound.

Second idea: *God's love is for everyone, and the Church is for everyone.* God's love is recognized by its hospitality. God always welcomes, He creates, He creates space for everyone, and sacrifices Himself for the other, He is attentive to the needs of the other. Mary stayed with Elizabeth for three months, helping her in her needs. These two women were creating space for each other, communicating between themselves. The Church is a mother with an open heart, who knows how to welcome and to receive, especially those who need greater care. How many wounds, how much desperation can be cured when one feels welcomed. And the Church welcomes us. This is why I dream of a Church in which no-one is superfluous, where no-one is "extra". Please, may the Church not have a "border control" to select who enters and who does not. No, everyone, everyone. Entrance is free. And then, may each person feel Jesus' invitation to follow Him, to see how one feels before God; and for this path there are the teachings and the Sacraments. Let us remember the Gospel: when the master of the banquet sends people out to the crossroads, saying: "Go to the thoroughfares, and invite to the marriage feast as many as you find" (cf. *Mt 22:9*). Do not forget this word: everyone. The Church is for everyone: young and old, healthy and sick, the righteous and sinners. This is what Jesus meant: everyone, everyone, everyone.

And the third idea: *it is fundamental that the young and the elderly open themselves to each other.* The young, encountering the elderly, have the opportunity to receive the wealth of their experiences and their lives. And the elderly, encountering the young, find in them the promise of a future filled with hope. It is important that you young people dialogue with the elderly, that you speak with your grandparents, that you listen to your grandparents, that you listen to the experience of life that goes beyond that of your parents. The point of encounter between Mary and Elizabeth is dreams. Both of them dreamt. The young dream, the elderly dream. It is precisely the dream, the capacity to dream, the vision of tomorrow that has kept and keeps the generations united, as the prophet Joel reminds us: "Your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions" (cf. *2:28*). In this way, the elderly dream of many things: democracy, the unity of nations... and the young prophesy, they are called to be artisans of the environment and of peace. Elizabeth, with the wisdom of years – she was elderly – strengthens Mary, who was young and full of grace, guided by the Spirit.

Dear young people, I do not want to deliver a long sermon. I invite you to be builders of bridges. Builders of bridges between the generations, recognizing the dreams of those who preceded them along the way. The alliance between the generations keeps the history and the culture of a people alive. I wish for you, young Russians, the vocation of being artisans of peace in the midst of so many conflicts, in the midst of so many polarizations that are everywhere, that afflict our world. I invite you to be sowers, to sow seeds of reconciliation, tiny seeds that in this wintertime of war will not germinate for the moment on frozen ground, but in a future spring will flourish. As I said in Lisbon: have the courage to replace fears with dreams. Replace fears with dreams. Do not be administrators of fear, but entrepreneurs of dreams. Permit yourself the luxury of dreaming big!

Dear young people, thank you for the time you have given to me, for having wanted to share with me a few of your dreams and your hopes, your fears and your sufferings. Thank you to Varvara for her witness of family. Thank you to Alexander for his witness of life. Thank you! And thank you all for the witness you are giving today, in this meeting.

I invite you to look to Mary, to find the Lord, to conceive of Him in your heart and to bring him promptly, in haste, to those who are distant, to bring him to those who are in need. Be a sign of hope, a sign of peace and joy, like Mary, because with the same "humility of his handmaid", you too can change the historical moment in which you live. Put yourselves into play for the future, anchored by the roots of your grandparents. I greet you affectionately. I am happy to have spoken with you. I give you my blessing. I pray for you, and please, do not forget to pray for me.
