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Synod18 – Second General Congregation: Intervention by Briana Regina Santiago, of the “Apostles of the Interior Life” (United States of America)

The following is the intervention by Briana Regina Santiago, of the “Apostles of the Interior Life” (United States of America), auditor at the Synod of Bishops, during the second General Congregation this morning:

Intervention of Briana R. Santiago

Holy Father, and everyone here, my name is Briana Santiago, I am 27, and I am from San Antonio, Texas. I have just started the fifth year of formation with the community of consecrated women, the “Apostles of the Interior Life”, and the fourth year of philosophical and theological studies at the Pontifical Lateran University here in Rome.

We young people of today are in search; search for the meaning of life, job search, search for our way or vocation, search for our identity. “Young people dream of safety, stability and fulfilment ... a place where the young person can feel that he or she belongs” [1]. Afflicted by loneliness, the fragility of the family, and existential anxiety, we ask from the Church to be accompanied by “living testimonies to witness” able to “evangelize by their life” [2]. We recognize the usefulness of the “exchange of information, ideals, values and common interests” that is possible through the Internet, but also how the technology used in an inhumane way can create “a delusional parallel reality that ignores human dignity” [3].

Most of what I have just listed is the result of the reflection made during the pre-Synodal meeting of last March. I participated by welcoming young English speakers who were connected through social media, and I was physically present among the three hundred delegates while the reflection was taking place. I can share with you that I was surprised by how many desires we young people have in common, despite our many origins and cultures. There was so much joy in that hall: the joy of knowing and being known, that you felt in the laughter, the songs, and the chatter during the breaks. We young people want dialogue, authenticity and participation, and there we were welcomed by adults who were willing and eager to know what we carry in our hearts. It was an experience of fraternity among very different people, some of them also belonging to other religions or non-

believers, who lived seven days of communion and mutual sharing.

We recognize that there are so many needs in the world, so many topics on which we need to reflect and dialogue, and so we are even more grateful that at this moment in history the Church is focusing on us and everything that concerns us. This is an honour and for us also a great responsibility, to be transparent and aware of our fragility in order to help not only ourselves, but also the generations that will come after us.

On a more personal level, I can share with you that the Lord led me to Rome to seriously discern the consecrated life, not only because my family is practicing Catholic, but also thanks to every person who was Providence on my way. My parish priest in San Antonio was one of us, and in his neighbourhood I saw a welcoming Church that cared for even the smallest member, and I melted before that love. My catechists spoke not only of rules, but also of their personal relationship with Christ, who changed my image of God from judge to Father. At university then I met a consecrated woman who took seriously everything that I was experiencing and accompanied me, helping me to pray and to develop my inner life. As it was for me, I believe that all young people need to be heard first, and then guided to enter more deeply into ourselves. "In short, we should be met where we are – intellectually, emotionally, spiritually, socially and physically" [4].

I join with you all in the hope that the Spirit may descend on each one of us and illuminate that which will bring us ever closer to happiness, to the encounter with Christ in the fullness of life and love.

[1] From the Final Document of the Pre-Synodal Meeting on *Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment*, 2018.

[2] Id.

[3] Id.

[4] Id.
