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Synod18 – Meeting of Young People with the Holy Father and the Synod Fathers

At 17.00 this afternoon in the Paul VI Hall, in the presence of the Holy Father Francis, the “*Noi per. Unici, solidali, creativi*” meeting was held, a special event part of the 15th General Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the theme: *Young People, the faith and vocational discernment* (3-28 October 2018).

During the meeting, animated by testimonies and artistic and musical contributions, the Pope gave the following address in response to questions from some young people:

Address of the Holy Father

Here are the written questions... The Synod Fathers will give the answers. Because if I gave the answers here, I would annul the Synod! The answers must come from all, from our reflection, from our discussion, and above all, they must be answers given without fear.

I will limit myself – with regard to all these questions – to saying just what may be useful, some principles.

To you, young people who have spoken, who have given your testimony, who have taken a path, I say: this is the first answer. Take your path. Be young people on the move, who look to the horizons, not in the mirror. Always looking ahead, on the move, and not sitting on the sofa. Very often I find myself saying this: a young person, a boy, a girl, who stays on the sofa, ends up a pensioner at 24: this is bad, this! And then, you said it well: it is not looking in the mirror that lets me find myself, looking at myself as I am. Finding oneself is in doing, in going in search for good, for truth, for beauty. There I will find myself.

Then, on this path, another word that struck me is the last one. It was powerful, that last one, but it is true... Who said it? ... You. It was strong: consistency. Consistency in life. I take a path, but with a consistent life. And when you see an inconsistent Church, a Church that reads you the Beatitudes then falls into clericalism, more princely and scandalous, I understand, I understand... If you are a Christian, you take the Beatitudes and you put them into practice. And if you are a man or a woman who has given life, who has consecrated it; if you are a priest –

even a dancing priest! [referring to a testimony] – if you are a priest who wants to live as a Christian, follow the path of the Beatitudes. Not the path of worldliness, the path of clericalism, which is one of the ugliest perversions of the Church. Consistency in life. But you too [addressing the young], you must be consistent in your path and ask yourselves, “Am I consistent in my life?”. This is the second principle.

Then there is the problem of inequality. One loses the true meaning of power – this applies to the question on politics – one loses what Jesus said to us, that power is service: true power is serving. Otherwise it is selfishness, it is putting down others, not letting them grow, it is dominating, making slaves, not mature people. Power is for making people grow, for making oneself servants of the people. This is the principle: both for politics, and for the consistency of your questions.

Then, other questions... I will tell you something. Please, you, young people, boys and girls, you are without price! You are not goods up for auction! Please, do not let yourselves be bought, do not let yourselves be seduced, do not let yourselves be enslaved by ideological colonizations that put ideas in our head and in the end we become slaves, dependent, failures in life. You are without price: you must repeat this always: I am not up for auction, I have no price I am free, I am free! Fall in love with this freedom, which is what Jesus offers you.

Then there are two things – and I would like to finish with this – among the ideas that you have said and to which the Synod Fathers will respond, engaging in dialogue with your questions. The first is on the use of the web. It is true, digital interconnection is immediate, it is effective, it is rapid. But if you get used to this, you will end up – and what I am about to say is real – you will end up like a family where, at the table, at lunch or at dinner, each person has their mobile phone and speaks with other people, or they communicate between themselves with the mobile phone, without a concrete, real relationship, without concreteness. Every road you take, to be reliable, must be concrete, like the experiences, the many experiences you have mentioned here. None of the testimonies you have given were “liquid”: they were all concrete. Concreteness. Concreteness is the guarantee for going ahead. If the media, if the use of the web leads you astray from concreteness, and makes you “liquid”, cut it out. Cut it out. Because if there is no concreteness there will be no future for you. This is certain, it is a rule of the road and of the path.

And then, this concreteness, also in acceptance. Many of your examples, which you have given today, are about acceptance. Michel asked this question: “How can we defeat the increasingly widespread mentality that sees the foreigner, those who are different, the migrant, as a danger, an evil, an enemy to be banished?” This is the mentality of the exploitation of people, of making slaves of the weakest. It is closing not only doors, but also closing hands. And today there is something of a fashion for populisms, which have nothing to do with what is popular. Popular is the culture of the people, the culture of each one of your peoples which is expressed in art, it is expressed in culture, it is expressed in the science of the people, it is expressed in celebration! Every people celebrates in its own way. This is popular. But populism is the opposite: it is closing this on a model. We are closed, we are alone. And when we are closed we no longer go ahead. Beware. It is the mentality that Michel mentioned: “How can we defeat the increasingly widespread mentality that sees the foreigner, those who are different, the migrant, as a danger, an evil, an enemy to be banished?” It is defeated with the embrace, with acceptance, with dialogue, with love, which is the word that opens all doors.

And in the end – I spoke about concreteness – each one of you wishes to take a path in life, a concrete one that bears fruit. Thank you [Giovanni Caccamo] for the photo with your grandfather: it was perhaps, that photograph, the most beautiful message of this evening. Speak with the elderly, speak with your grandparents: they are the roots, the roots of your concreteness, the roots of your growth, your blossoming and bearing fruit. Remember: if the tree is alone, it does not bear fruit. All that blossoms on the tree comes from what is beneath the ground. This is an expression from a poet, it is not mine. But it is the truth. Attach yourselves to your roots, but do not remain there. Take the roots and take them forward to bear fruit, and you too will become roots for others. Do not forget that photograph, the one with the grandfather. Speak with your grandparents, speak with the elderly, and this will make you happy

Many thanks! These are some guidelines. The answers will come from them! [indicating the Synod Fathers]. Thank you, thank you!
