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Apostolic Trip of Pope Francis to Panama for the 34th World Youth Day (23-28 January 2019) – Holy Mass for World Youth Day in Campo San Juan Pablo II

Holy Mass for World Youth Day in *Campo San Juan Pablo II*

Homily of the Holy Father

Final greeting of the Holy Father

This morning, after leaving the apostolic nunciature, the Holy Father Francis transferred by car to Campo San Juan Pablo II (Metro Park) for the Holy Mass concluding the 34th World Youth Day, on the theme: “I am the servant of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word” (*Lk* 1: 38).

Upon arrival, the Pope was received by the archbishop of Panama, H.E. Msgr. José Domingo Ulloa Mendieta, O.S.A., who accompanied him on the popemobile for a tour among the faithful.

At 8.00 local time (14.00 in Rome), the Holy Father presided at the Eucharistic celebration for the third Sunday of ordinary time. Introduced by greetings from the archbishop of Panama, and after the proclamation of the Gospel, the Holy Father pronounced his homily.

At the end of the Eucharistic celebration, the prefect of the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life, His Eminence Cardinal Kevin Joseph Farrell, after briefly addressing the Pope, announced that the next WYD will be held in Lisbon, Portugal, in 2022.

Befor the final blessing the Holy Father addressed some words of greeting to the young people and pilgrims present. Then, after greeting forty local benefactors, he transferred by car to the *Casa Hogar del Buen Samaritano Juan Díaz*.

The following is the homily pronounced by the Pope during the Holy Mass:

Homily of the Holy Father

"The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them: 'Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing'" (*Lk* 4:20-21).

With these words, the Gospel presents the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. It started in the synagogue that saw him grow up; he was in the midst of neighbours and people he knew, and perhaps even some of his childhood "catechists" who had taught him the Law. It was an important moment in the life of the Master: the child who was educated and grew up in that community, stood up and took the floor to proclaim and put into action God's dream. A word previously proclaimed only as a future promise, but now, on the lips of Jesus alone, could be spoken in the present tense, as it became a reality: "Today it has been fulfilled".

Jesus reveals the *now of God*, who comes to meet us and call us to take part in his *now* of "proclaiming good news to the poor… bringing liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, setting at liberty those who are oppressed, announcing the year of the Lord's favour" (*Lk* 4:18-19). This is the *now of God*. It becomes present with Jesus: it has a face, it is flesh. It is a merciful love that does not wait for ideal or perfect situations to show itself, nor does it accept excuses for its appearance. It is God's time, that makes every situation and place both right and proper. In Jesus, the promised future begins and becomes life.

When? Now. Yet not everyone who was listening felt invited or called. Not all the residents of Nazareth were prepared to believe in someone they knew and had seen grow up, and who was now inviting them to realize a long-awaited dream. Not only that, but they said, "Is not this Joseph's son?" (*Lk* 4:22).

The same thing can also happen with us. We do not always believe that God can be that concrete and commonplace, that close and real, and much less that he can become so present and work through somebody like a neighbour, a friend, a relative. We do not always believe that the Lord can invite us to work and soil our hands with him in his Kingdom in that simple and blunt a way. It is hard to accept that "God's love can become concrete and can almost be experienced in history with all its painful and glorious vicissitudes" (BENEDICT XVI, *General Audience*, 28 September 2005).

Often we too behave like the neighbours in Nazareth: we prefer a *distant* God: nice, good, generous, well depicted, yet far-off, and above all a God who does not inconvenience us, a "domesticated" God. Because a close and everyday God, a God who is friend and brother, demands that we be concerned with our surroundings, everyday affairs and above all fraternity. God chose not to reveal himself as an angel or in some spectacular way, but to give us a face that is fraternal and friendly, concrete and familiar. God is real because love is real; God is concrete because love is concrete. Indeed, this "concrete manifestation of love is one of the essential elements in the life of Christians" (BENEDICT XVI, *Homily*, 1 March 2006).

We can also run the same risks as the neighbours at Nazareth, when within our communities the Gospel seeks to be lived concretely. We begin to say: But these young people, aren't they the children of Mary, Joseph, aren't they the brothers and sisters of… related to…? Are these not the youngsters we saw grow up? They should keep quiet; how can we believe them? That one over there, wasn't he the one who kept breaking windows with his ball? What was born as prophecy and proclamation of the kingdom of God gets domesticated and impoverished. Wanting to domesticate the word of God is a daily temptation.

You too, dear young people, can experience this whenever you think that your mission, your vocation, even your life itself, is a promise far off in the future, having nothing to do with the present. As if being young were a kind of waiting room, where we sit around until we are called. And in the "meantime", we adults or you yourselves invent a hygienically sealed future, without consequences, where everything is safe, secure and "well insured". We

don't want to offer you a laboratory kind of future. This is a "make-believe" happiness, not the happiness of today, of what is concrete, of love. And so, with this "make-believe" happiness, we "tranquilize" you, we numb you into keeping quiet, so that you don't make too much of a nuisance, so that you don't question yourselves or question us; and in that "meantime" your dreams lose their buoyancy, they seem to move slowly, they begin to become flat and dreary, petty and plaintive (cf. *Palm Sunday Homily*, 25 March 2018). Only because we think, or you think, that your *now* has not yet come, that you are too young to be involved in dreaming about and working for the future. And that's how we keep procrastinating… And do you know something? A lot of young people like this. Please let us help them to not like this, to rebel, and to want to live the "now" of God.

One of the fruits of the last Synod was the enrichment that came from being able to meet and above all to listen to one another. The enrichment of intergenerational dialogue, the enrichment of exchange and the value of realizing that we need one another, that we have to work to create channels and spaces that encourage dreaming of and working for tomorrow, starting today. And this, not in isolation, but rather side by side, creating a common space. A space that is not simply taken for granted, or won in a lottery, but a space for which you too must fight. You young people must fight for your space today, because life is living for today. No one can make promises to you about a day in the future. Your life today is today. Your taking risks is today. Your space is today. How are you reacting to this?

You, dear young people, are not the future. We like to say, "you are the future". No, you are the present. You are not the future of God, you young people are the *now of God*. He invites you and calls you in your communities and cities to go out and find your grandparents, your elders; to stand up and with them to speak out and realize the dream that the Lord has dreamed for you.

Not tomorrow, now, for wherever your treasure is now, there will your heart also be (cf. *Mt* 6:21). Whatever you fall in love with, it will win over not only your imagination, it will affect everything. It will be what makes you get up in the morning, what keeps you going at times of fatigue, what will break open your hearts and fill you with wonder, joy and gratitude. Realize that you have a mission and fall in love; that will decide everything (cf. PEDRO ARRUPE, S.J., *Nada es más práctico*). We may possess everything, but, dear young friends, if we lack the passion of love, we will have nothing. The passion of love today! Let us allow the Lord to make us fall in love and let him take us into the future!

For Jesus, there is no "meantime", but only a merciful love that wants to enter into and win over our hearts. He wants to be our treasure, because Jesus is not a "meantime", an interval in life or a passing fad; he is generous love that invites us to entrust ourselves.

He is concrete, close, real love, today. He is festive joy, born of opting for and taking part in the miraculous draught of hope and charity, solidarity and fraternity, despite the paralyzed and paralyzing gaze born of fear and exclusion, speculation and manipulation.

Brothers and sisters, the Lord and his mission are not a "meantime" in our life, something temporary, they are not only a World Day of Youth, they are our life today, our life of journeying ahead!

In a special way throughout these days, Mary's *fiat* has been whispering like a kind of music in the background. She not only believed in God and in his promises as something possible, she believed God himself and dared to say "yes" to taking part in this *now* of the Lord. She felt she had a mission; she fell in love and that decided everything. May you feel that you have a mission, may you fall in love; the Lord will decide everything.

As in the synagogue of Nazareth, the Lord stands up again among us his friends and acquaintances; he takes the book and says to us "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (*Lk* 4:21).

Dear young friends, do you want to live out your love in a practical way? May your "yes" continue to be the gateway for the Holy Spirit to give us a new Pentecost for the Church and for the world.

Final greeting of the Holy Father

At the conclusion of this celebration, I thank God for having given us the opportunity to share these days together and to experience once more this World Youth Day.

In particular, I want to thank the President of Panama, Juan Carlos Varela Rodríguez, the Presidents of other nations and the other political and civil authorities for their presence at this celebration.

I thank Bishop José Domingo Ulloa Mendieta, Archbishop of Panama, for his generosity and hard work in hosting this World Youth Day in his diocese, as well as the other bishops of this and the neighbouring countries, for all they have done in their communities to provide accommodation and assistance to the great numbers of young people.

My thanks also go to all those who have supported us with their prayers, and who have helped by their efforts and hard work to make this World Youth Day dream come true in this country.

And to you, dear young people, a big “thank you”. Your faith and joy have made Panama, America and the entire world shake! As we have heard so many times in these days in the song of this World Youth Day: “As your pilgrim people we are gathered here today from every continent and city”. We are on a journey, keep walking, keep living the faith and sharing the faith. Do not forget that you are not the tomorrow, you are not the “meantime”; you are the *now of God*.

The venue for the next World Youth Day has already been announced. I ask you not to let the fervour of these days grow cold. Go back to your parishes and communities, to your families and your friends, and share what you have lived, so that others can resonate with the strength and concrete enthusiasm that is yours. And with Mary, keep saying “yes” to the dream that God has sown in you.

And, please, do not forget to pray for me.