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Presentation of the International Youth Forum, promoted by the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life: “Youth in action in a synodal Church” (19 to 22 June 2019)

This morning, in the Holy See Press Office, a press conference was held to present the International Youth Forum, organized by the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life: “Youth in action in a synodal Church”, to be held in Sassone di Ciampino, Rome, from 19 to 22 June 2019, and whose aim is to promote the reception and continuation of the synod Path of the 15th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, held in the Vatican from 3 to 28 October 2018: “Young people, the faith and vocational discernment”.

The speakers at the conference were Rev. Fr. Alexandre Awi Mello, I.Sch., secretary of the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life; Rev. Fr. João Chagas, head of the Youth Office of the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life; Desfortunées Kuissuk Feupeussi, head of youth of the Emmanuel Community in Cameroon, member of the youth group of Douala, Cameroon, auditor of the 15th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops; Isabella McCafferty, member of the Council for Youth of the Episcopal Council of New Zealand, engaged in youth pastoral care in the archdiocese of Wellington, New Zealand, present at the pre-Synodal meeting in March 2018; and Michele Borghi, delegate of the Communion and Liberation Movement and present at the pre-Synodal meeting in March 2018.

In his intervention, Rev. Fr. Alexandre Awi Mello recalled that the new Apostolic Exhortation that governs the functioning of the Synod of Bishops - the “*Episcopalis Communio*”, signed by Pope Francis, provides not only a *preparatory stage* and a *celebratory stage* but also a stage of the application of the Synod. “This *novelty* aims to ensure the *reception and implementation* of the conclusions of the Synodal assembly”, he said. “Putting into practice what is said by the Synod is a task for all the particular Churches and Episcopal Conferences, but which – on the part of the Roman Curia – must be promoted in particular by bodies competent on the theme of the Synod”.

One of these entities is, without doubt, the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life, which has as its mission – among others – expressing “the Church’s special care for the young, promoting their agency amid the challenges of today’s world. In this sense”, he continued, “our field is youth pastoral care. We therefore took the initiative of promoting this International Forum, which concentrates especially on the consequences of the Synod for the work that the Particular Churches and the ecclesial movements carry out with regard to this specific environment”.

“Encouraged by the whole Synod process, which was a real *kairós* in the life of the Church, young people will consider in particular the Final Document of the Synod and the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christus vivit*”, explained the under-secretary, noting that the young delegates of the Episcopal Conferences and the main movements and ecclesial communities with great international range, including some young auditors of the Synod, were invited to the Forum, so that they can communicate their experience. “They will be accompanied by some Youth Ministry experts at the international level, but the protagonists will be the young people themselves, who will have space for discernment in community, maintaining the synodal missionary style, promoted by the Synod”.

The general theme of the Forum will be: “Young people in action in a synodal Church”, and each day will have a specific emphasis. Wednesday 19th will be dedicated to the phase of the Synod path and its impact on the local Churches. The second day will be dedicated to the reception of the Pope’s exhortation: “*Christus vivit*, the ripe fruit of the Synod for young people”. “It will involve perceiving in panels and working groups the concrete ways in which *Christus vivit* inspires the reality of young people”, explained Mello. The third day will address the practical contribution that the young people present can give to the ecclesial communities to which belong so as to continue to advance in a Synodal way. Finally, on Saturday, there will be an audience with the Pope.

A total of 246 young delegates aged between 18 and 29 will participate in the Forum, representing 109 countries and 37 communities, movements and ecclesial associations. They will include eighteen young people who were auditors at last year’s Synod of Bishops. It will also be attended by fifteen heads of youth pastoral care from various countries.

With regard to participation “from a distance”, the secretary explained, “all young people will be invited to accompany the news, photos and videos that will be published with the official hashtag #youthforum19 in the social media of the Dicastery (Twitter, Instagram), the photos on our Flickr account and also our site www.laityfamilylife.va. We also wish to motivate and to ask young people from all over the world to share through the social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter) all that is being done to apply the synodal process and *Christus vivit* in their local circumstances, again using the same hashtag #youthforum19”.

“It is worth making a final observation”, he concluded. “The former Pontifical Council for the Laity held ten International Youth Forums similar to his, with the aim of treating themes specific to youth pastoral care. The first were directly linked to the WYDs. The last was in 2010. This shows that the Roman Curia’s concern for the young originated some time ago and is not a current trend, momentary and transient”.
