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Message of the Holy Father to the participants in the Youth Festival (26 to 30 July, Medjugorje)

The following is the Message sent by the Holy Father Francis to the participants in the Youth Festival, taking place in Medjugorje from 26 to 30 July:

Message

Dear friends,

I joyfully address you who are participating in the Youth Festival in Medjugorje, an occasion to celebrate and renew your faith. I hope you will live these days as a spiritual pilgrimage that will lead you to encounter the Lord Jesus in the Eucharist, in Adoration, in Confession, in biblical catechesis, in silent prayer and the Rosary, and also through testimonies.

The theme proposed for your reflection this year is: "Here are my mother and my brethren!" (*Mt* 12:49). The evangelist Matthew recounts that while Jesus is speaking to the crowd, someone tells him that his mother and brothers are standing outside looking for him. Jesus responds with a question: “Who is my mother, and who are my brethren?” (Mt 12:48). And pointing to his disciples, he says: "Here are my mother and my brethren! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother, and sister, and mother” (*Mt* 12:49-50).

We are very struck by Jesus' gesture and words because, at first sight, they appear to be a lack of respect towards his Mother and his relatives. In reality, with this expression He wanted to show us that it is adherence to the Father's will that establishes us in union with Him, a bond superior to the closest ties of blood. Dear young people, God's will is a priceless treasure! That is why the Virgin Mary forged a bond of kinship with Jesus even before she gave birth to him. She becomes disciple and mother of her Son the moment she accepts the words of the Angel, responding: "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord, let it be to me according to your word” (*Lk* 1:38). From that moment, her whole life was a continuous fulfilment of God's will.

And yet, we often find ourselves in contrast with this will; at times we struggle to understand it and accept it, we

would like a different life, without challenges, without sufferings; we would like ourelves to be different, perhaps more intelligent, richer in talents or natural aptitudes. However, for us there is no will better than that of the Father, which is the plan of love for us in view of His kingdom and our complete happiness. Often, we fear this will, because we are afraid that God may impose on us something purely arbitrary and not for our good; we are afraid that accepting his will means renouncing our freedom. Instead, we must seek intensely, asking God the Father to let us know His will and ask that it be fulfilled in us. And the deepest reason for wishing this is shown to us precisely by Jesus: doing the will of the Father makes us His children, brothers, sisters, mothers, and it makes us grow in love towards Him and towards others.

Dear young people, God has a plan of love for each one of you. Do not be afraid of His will, but place all your trust in His grace. For Him, you are precious and important, because you are the work of His hands (cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Christus vivit*, 115). Only He knows hour heart and your deepest desires. Only He, who loves you with an absolute love, is capable of filling your aspirations. No-one, besides God, can give you true happiness. Following Mary's example, know how to give Him your unconditional "yes". Let there be no place in your life for selfishness or for idleness. Make the most of your youth to lay, together with the Lord, the foundations of your existence, because your personal, professional and social future will depend on the choices you make during these years.

On this journey, dear young people, may Mary Most Holy accompany you and teach you to discern and welcome the will of the heavenly Father in your lives. With youth, imprint the present time with hope and enthusiasm. Be enthusiastic missionaries of the new evangelization! Bring to those who suffer, to those who are searching, the joy that Jesus wants to give. Bring it into your families, into your schools and universities, into your workplaces and groups of friends, wherever you live. If you allow God's grace to work in you, if you are generous and persevering in your daily commitment, you will make this world a better place for all. I bless you from my heart. And I ask you, please, to pray for me.

Rome, Saint John Lateran, 29 June 2023

Solemnity of the Saints Apostles Peter and Paul

FRANCIS