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General Audience

This morning's General Audience took place at 9.00 in the Paul VI Hall.

In his address in Italian, the Pope focused on his recent Apostolic Journey in Portugal, on the occasion of the 37th World Youth Day.

After summarizing his catechesis in various languages, the Holy Father addressed special greetings to the faithful present.

The General Audience concluded with the recitation of the *Pater Noster* and the Apostolic Blessing.

Catechesis of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

In the past few days, I went to Portugal for the 37th World Youth Day.

This World Youth Day in Lisbon, after the pandemic, was considered by all to be a gift of God, who has set in motion once again the hearts and the steps of the world's youth on the path of the Gospel: many young people from all over the world, many of them! To meet each other and to meet Jesus.

The pandemic, as we well know, had a severe impact on social behaviour: isolation often degenerated into closure, and young people were particularly affected. With this World Youth Day, God gave a "push" in the other direction. It marked a new beginning of the great pilgrimage of young people across the continents, in the name of Jesus Christ.

And it was not a coincidence that this happened in Lisbon, a city overlooking the ocean, a city that is a symbol of

the great explorations by sea.

And so, at World Youth Day, the Gospel proposed to young people the model of the Virgin Mary. At her most critical moment, she goes to visit her cousin Elizabeth, and the Gospel says Mary “arose and went in haste” (Lk 1:39). I like to invoke Our Lady in this way, Our Lady “in haste”. She always does things in haste, she never makes us wait; She is the mother of everyone. In this way, Mary guides the pilgrimage of young people in following Jesus today, in the third millennium. Just as she did a century ago in Portugal, at Fatima, when she spoke to three children, entrusting them with a message of faith and hope for the Church and the world. That is why, in World Youth Day, I returned to Fatima, where the apparition took place, and, together with some sick young people, I prayed to God that he would heal the world of the diseases of the soul: pride, lies, enmity, violence are diseases of the soul, and the world is ailing from these diseases. And we renewed our consecration, the consecration of Europe, of the world, to Mary, to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. I prayed for peace because there are so many wars all over the world, so many.

The young people of the world came to Lisbon in large numbers and with great enthusiasm. I met them in small groups and some with a great deal of problems; the group of young Ukrainians who brought stories that were painful. It was not a holiday, a tourist trip, nor even a spiritual event for its own sake. World Youth Day is an encounter with the living Christ through the Church, the young people go to encounter Christ; it is true that where there are young people there is joy, there is a bit of all these things!

My visit to Portugal, on the occasion of World Youth Day, benefited from its festive atmosphere, this wave of young people. I thank God for this, thinking especially of the Church of Lisbon which, in exchange for the great effort made in organizing and hosting it, will receive new energies to continue its new journey, to cast its nets once again with apostolic zeal. The youth of Portugal are already today a vital presence, and now, after this “transfusion” received from Churches around the world, they will become even more so.

And many young people have returned via Rome: I am seeing them here too, there are some who participated in this Day. There they are! Where there are young people there is noise, they are good at making it!

While in Ukraine and other places in the world there is fighting, and while in certain hidden halls war is planned – this is bad, war is planned! – World Youth Day showed everyone that another way is possible, a world of brothers and sisters, where the flags of all peoples fly together, next to each other, without hatred, without fear, without closing up, without weapons! The message of the young people was clear: will the “mighty of the earth” listen to it, I wonder? This youthful enthusiasm that wants peace? It is a parable for our time, and even today Jesus says: “Whoever have ears, let them hear! Whoever has eyes, let them see!” Let us hope that the entire world listens to this World Youth Day and watches this beauty of the young, going forward.

Once again, I express my gratitude to Portugal, to Lisbon, to the President of the Republic, who was present at all the celebrations, and the other civil authorities; to the Patriarch of Lisbon, who was good; the President of the Episcopal Conference, and the bishop who organized World Youth Day, and to all the collaborators and volunteers. Think that the volunteers – I went to meet them on the last day, before returning – numbered 25 thousand: this World Youth Day had 25 thousand volunteers! Thank you all! Through the intercession of the Virgin Mary, may the Lord bless the young people of the world and may he bless the Portuguese people. Let us pray together to Our Lady, all together, that She may bless the Portuguese people.

[recitation of the *Hail Mary*]

Greeting in English

I extend a warm welcome to the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today’s Audience, especially the groups from Malta, Nigeria, Tonga and the United States of America. Upon you and your families I

invoke the joy and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ. God bless you all!
