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MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO YOUNG PEOPLE GATHERED IN MEDJUGORJE FOR THE ANNUAL MEETING

Dear young friends!

The annual youth meeting in Medjugorje is a time rich in prayer, catechesis and fraternity. It offers all of you the opportunity to encounter the living Jesus Christ, especially in the Eucharist where he is praised and adored, and in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. And in this way he helps you to discover another way of living, different from the one offered by our ephemeral culture, according to which nothing can be definitive and the only thing that matters is enjoying the present moment. In this climate of relativism, in which it is difficult to find true and certain answers, the guiding words of the Festival, “Come and see” (Jn 1:39), addressed by Jesus to the disciples, are a blessing. To you too, Jesus directs his gaze and invites you to go and be with him.

Do not be afraid! Christ is alive and desires that each of you live. He is the true beauty and youth of this world. Everything he touches becomes young, becomes new, full of life and meaning (cf. Apost. Exhort. *Christus Vivit*, 1). We see it precisely in that Gospel scene when the Lord asks the two disciples who are following him “What do you seek?”. And they answer: “Rabbi, where are you staying?”. And Jesus says: “Come and see” (cf. Jn 1:35-39). And they go, see, and stay. In those disciples’ memory the experience of the encounter with Jesus was so ingrained that one of them even recorded the time: “It was about the tenth hour” (v. 39).

The Gospel tells us that after staying at the Lord’s house, the two disciples became “mediators” who allowed others to encounter him, to know him and to follow him. Andrew went immediately to tell his brother Simon about him, and led him to Jesus. When he saw Simon, the Teacher immediately gave him a nickname: “Cephas”, which means “rock” [in Aramaic], and will become the name Peter (cf. Jn 1:40-42). This shows that in encountering Jesus we become a new person, and we receive the mission to transmit this experience to others, while always keeping our eyes fixed on him, the Lord.

Beloved young people, have you encountered this gaze of Jesus who asks you: “What do you seek”? Have you heard his voice which tells you: “Come and see”? Have you felt that impulse



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to set out on a journey? Take time to be with Jesus, to be filled with his Spirit and to be ready for the fascinating adventure of life. Go to encounter him; stay with him in prayer; entrust yourselves to him who is the expert on the human heart.

This most beautiful invitation from the Lord: “Come and see”, made by Christ’s young and beloved disciple, is also addressed to future disciples. Jesus invites you to encounter him and this Festival becomes an opportunity to be able “to come and to see”. The word “come”, in addition to indicating a physical movement, has a deeper, spiritual meaning. It points to an itinerary of faith whose aim is “to see”, that is, to experience the Lord and, thanks to him, to see the full and definitive meaning of our existence.

The Church’s great model, of a youthful heart, ready to follow Christ with freshness and docility, is always the Virgin Mary. The power of her ‘yes’ and of that “let it be to me” that she said to the angel always strikes us. Her ‘yes’ means being involved and taking risks, with no other guarantee but the certainty of being the bearer of a promise. Her “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord” (Lk 1:38) is the most beautiful example that tells us what happens when a person, in her freedom, abandons herself into God’s hands. May this example fascinate you and guide you! Mary is the Mother who “watches over us, her children, on our journey through life, often weary and in need, anxious that the light of hope not fail. For that is our desire: that the light of hope never fail. Mary our Mother looks to this pilgrim people: a youthful people whom she loves, and who seek her in the silence of their hearts amid all the noise, the chatter and the distractions of the journey” (*Christus Vivit*, 48).

Dear young people, “keep running, attracted by the face of Christ, whom we love so much, whom we adore in the Holy Eucharist and acknowledge in the flesh of our suffering brothers and sisters. May the Holy Spirit urge you on as you run this race. The Church needs your momentum, your intuitions, your faith” (*ibid.*, 299). On your route through the Gospel, also enlivened by this Festival, I entrust all of you to the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, invoking light and strength from the Spirit so that you may be true witnesses to Christ. I pray for this and I bless you, and I ask that you, too, pray for me.

Rome, Saint John Lateran, 29 June 2020

Francis