



# The Holy See

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**MESSAGE OF THE HOLY FATHER LEO XIV  
TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE 36th INTERNATIONAL YOUTH FESTIVAL (MLADIFEST)**

[Medjugorje, 4-8 August 2025]

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*Dear young people,*

I am very pleased to address you, with a message on the occasion of the 36th Festival which brings together in Medjugorje, as every year. You come from many countries of the world: I affectionately address the greeting of the Risen Lord to all of you: “Peace be with you!”

In these days you are meditating on the motto chosen for the Festival: “We will go to the house of the Lord” (*Psalms* 122:1). This phrase tells us of a journey, of a desire to move towards God, towards his dwelling-place, where we can truly be at home, because he awaits us there with his Love. How can one walk towards the house of the Lord without losing our way? Jesus told us: “I am the way” (*Jn* 14:6): it is he who accompanies us, leads us, strengthens us along the way. His Spirit opens our eyes and makes us see what we would not be able to understand by ourselves.

On the path of life, no-one walks alone. Our paths are always intertwined with those of others: we are made for encounter, for walking together, for discovering together a shared goal. Therefore, I gladly share with you a reflection of Saint Augustine, who does not speak about the house of the Lord as a distant destination, but rather announces the joy of a journey experienced together, as a pilgrim people: “Let us go, let us go! They thus speak to one another and, kindling, as it were, one another, they form a single flame. And this one flame, born of the one speaking communicates to the other the fire with which it burns” (S. Aurelii Augustini, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, PL 37, p. 1619). What a wonderful image! No one walks alone: we incite each other, we kindle each other. The flames of hearts unite, and become one great fire that lights the way. You too, young people, are not lonely pilgrims. This road to the Lord is travelled together. This is the beauty of faith lived in the Church.

Through everyday encounters, we can journey together on our pilgrimage towards the house of the Lord. In this regard, dear friends, you know well that we live in an increasingly digital world, where artificial intelligence and technology offer a thousand opportunities. Remember: no algorithm can ever substitute an embrace, a glance, a true encounter, neither with God, nor our friends, nor our family. Think of Mary. She too set out on an arduous journey to meet her cousin Elizabeth. It was not easy, but she did it, and that encounter gave rise to joy: John the Baptist rejoiced in his mother's womb, recognizing the living presence of the Lord in the womb of the virgin Mary. Following Mary's example, I therefore encourage you to seek out true encounters. Rejoice together, and do not be afraid to weep with those who weep, as Saint Paul also tells us: "Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep" (Rm 12:15).

You have come to Medjugorje from many nations, and perhaps it seems that language or culture is an obstacle to encounter: take courage. There is a language stronger than any barrier, the language of faith, nourished by God's love. You are all members of his Body, which is the Church: meet each other, get to know each other, share. Only in this way, by walking together, supporting each other, inspiring each other, will we reach the house of the Lord. What a joy to know that we are awaited in the house of the Father, welcomed by his love, and that we do not have to walk alone, but together!

Along the way, if any of you feel within the calling to a special vocation, to the consecrated life or the priesthood, I encourage you not to be afraid to respond. That invitation, which you feel vibrate within, comes from God, who speaks to our hearts. Listen to him with confidence: indeed, the word of the Lord not only makes us truly free and happy, but also authentically fulfils us as men and as Christians.

Dear young people, as I entrust every one of you to Mary, Mother of Christ and our Mother, I accompany you with my prayers. May the Holy Virgin encourage you and guide you along the way, to become proclaimers of peace and hope. From my heart I impart upon all of you my apostolic blessing.

*From Castel Gandolfo, 9 July 2025*

Leo PP. XIV

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*Holy See Press Office Bulletin, 4 August 2025*