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Audience with participants in the International Youth Forum

At 11.30 this morning, in the Clementine Hall of the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the participants in the International Youth Forum, promoted by the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life, taking place in Sassone di Ciampino, Rome, at the Casa Il Carmelo, from 19 to 22 June, on the theme: "Young people in action in a synodal Church".

The following is the address given by the Pope during the meeting:

Address of the Holy Father

Dear young friends,

I am very happy to meet you at the conclusion of the Eleventh International Youth Forum organized by the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life, aimed at promoting the implementation of the 2018 Synod on *Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment*. I am grateful to Cardinal Farrell and his entire staff for this initiative, which acknowledges that you, young people, are the chief protagonists of the pastoral conversion so greatly desired by the Synod Fathers. To call you "protagonists" is not just to say something nice about you. Either you are protagonists or you are not. Either you go ahead of the train or you end up as the final car, dragged along by the rest. Protagonists. You are *young people, and young people on the move, in a synodal Church*, and this is what you have been thinking about and reflecting on during these past days.

I thank Cardinal Farrell for his kind words, all of you for the reading of the final proclamation, and Cardinal Baldisseri, who kept the Synod moving forward, for his presence. Thank you!

The Final Document of the last synodal assembly views "the account of the disciples on the way to Emmaus (cf. *Lk* 24:13-35) as paradigmatic, a model for our understanding of the Church's mission to the young" (No. 4). When the two disciples were seated at table with Jesus, he "took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him" (*Lk* 24:30ff.). It is not by chance that you

celebrated the Solemnity of Corpus Christi at the very time when you were gathered for this meeting. Could it be that the Lord wanted once more to open your hearts so that he could speak to you through this page of the Gospel?

The experience of the disciples of Emmaus led them irresistibly to take up anew on their journey, even though they had already walked some seven miles. It was growing dark, yet they were no longer afraid to walk at night, for Christ was lighting up their lives. We too once encountered the Lord on the journey of our own life. Like the disciples of Emmaus, we were called to bring the light of Christ into the darkness of the world. You, dear young people, are called to be light in the dark night experienced by so many of your friends who do not yet know the joy of new life in Jesus.

Cleopas and the other disciple, after meeting Jesus, felt a vital need to be with their community. There can be no true joy unless we share it with others. “How very good and pleasant it is, when brothers live together in unity!” (Ps 133:1). I imagine that you are all happy that you could take part in this Forum. And now that the time has come to go home, perhaps you feel a certain nostalgia... and Rome will be a little more peaceful. But that is normal; it is part of our human experience. The disciples of Emmaus did not want their “mysterious guest” to go away... “Stay with us”, they said, in an effort to convince him to stay with them. In other parts of the Gospel, we see the same thing happening. We can recall, for example, the Transfiguration, when Peter, James and John wanted to set up tents and remain on the mountain. Or when Mary Magdalene met the risen Lord and wanted to cling to him. Yet, “his risen body is not a treasure to be locked up, but a mystery to be shared (*Final Document of the Synod*, 115). We encounter Jesus above all in the community and on the paths of the world. The more we bring him to others, the more we will feel his presence in our lives. I am certain that you will do this when you go home to your various countries. The Emmaus account tells us that Jesus lit a fire in the hearts of the disciples (cf. Lk 24:32). As you know, a fire, if it is not to go out, if it is not to turn into ashes, has to spread. So feed the fire of Christ burning in your hearts, and let it spread!

Dear young people, let me say to you once again: you are the today of God, the today of the Church! Not just the future, but the today. Either you start playing today, or you have lost the match. Today. The Church needs you, so that she can be fully herself. As Church, you are the body of the risen Lord present in the world. I would like you always to remember that you are members of one body, of this community. You are part of one another; by yourselves, you would not survive. You need one another, if you are to make a difference in a world increasingly tempted to divisiveness. Think about it. Our world is more and more divided, and divisions bring wars and conflict in their wake. You have to be a message of unity. It is worth setting out on this path. Only if we journey together, will we be truly strong. With Christ, the Bread of Life who gives us strength for the journey, let us bring his fire to light up the darkness of this world!

I would like to take this occasion to make an important announcement. As you know, the journey of preparation for the 2018 Synod mostly coincided with the journey of World Youth Day in Panama, which took place just three months later. In my 2017 Message to Young People, I expressed my hope for a harmonious coordination between those two journeys (cf. *Preparatory Document*, III, 5). Well then! The next international edition of World Youth Day will be held in Lisbon in 2022. (I can hear a fan of Portugal out there!) The theme I chose for this stage of the intercontinental pilgrimage of young people is: “*Mary arose and went with haste*” (cf. Lk 1:39). In the two coming years, I would ask you to meditate on these two verses: “*Young man, I say to you, arise!*” (cf. Lk 7:14; *Christus Vivit*, 20) and “*Stand up. I appoint you as a witness of what you have seen*” (cf. Acts 26:16). In this way, I hope that this time too, will see a harmonious coordination between our journey towards the Lisbon World Youth Day and our post-synodal journey. Do not tune out the voice of God, who urges you to arise and follow the paths that he has prepared for you. Like Mary, and in union with her, may you daily bring to others his joy and his love. The theme says that Mary arose and went with haste to see her cousin. Always ready, always hastening, but not anxious or troubled. I ask you to pray for me, and now I will give you my blessing. All together, each in his or her own language, but all together, let us recite the Hail Mary. *Hail Mary...*
