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BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIEGE
PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS

BOLLETTINO

SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

N. 180222b

Thursday 22.02.2018

Press Release of the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life on the Message of the Holy Father Francis for the 33rd World Youth Day (2018)

The Holy Father's Message to young people in preparation for the 33rd World Youth Day 2018 – celebrated at diocesan level on Palm Sunday – has as its theme: *“Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God”* (Lk 1: 30).

It is the second Message that the Pope has addressed to the young during the journey of preparation for WYD in Panama, which will take place from 22 to 27 January 2019. The Holy Father wanted the young people to be accompanied by the Virgin Mary in this spiritual pilgrimage. Indeed, while last year's Message was focused on the words of the Magnificat: *“He Who is mighty has done great things for me”* (Lk 1: 49), and next year's will reflect on Mary's answer to the angel: *“Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word”* (Lk 1: 38).

This “Marian trilogy” is an expression of Pope Francis' desire to offer to young people of all the world a theological vision of their existence: *“I fervently hope that you young people will continue to press forward, not only cherishing the memory of the past, but also with courage in the present and hope for the future”* (Message for WYD 2018). This path is linked with the Synod journey, which Peter's Successor wanted to be lived in great harmony with the preparation for WYD. The next Synod of Bishops (October 2018) on *Young people, faith and vocational discernment* also invites reflection on the situations in which the new generations live, on their life of faith and on the way in which they arrive at their fundamental decisions, which will forge their future and that of humanity.

It is significant that this Message, published on the feast of the Cathedra of Saint Peter, was signed by the Holy Father on 11 February, memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Lourdes, the day on which His Holiness opened registration for the WYD in Panama 2019.