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Press Release of the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life on the Holy Father Francis' Message for the 36th World Youth Day 2021 (Solemnity of Christ the King, 21 November 2021)

“Stand up. I appoint you as a witness of what you have seen” (*Acts 26:16*) is the theme of the Holy Father's Message to young people on the occasion of the 36th World Youth Day 2021, which will be held on 21 November in local Churches around the world. The text, signed by Pope Francis on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, is part of a series of three messages that accompany young people on the journey between WYD Panama 2019 and WYD Lisbon 2023, all centred on the verb “to rise”. This year, young people are invited to reflect on the conversion of Saint Paul, who went from being a “persecutor-executor” to a “disciple-witness”. Re-reading the episode of Damascus, a turning point in the history of the Apostle of the Nations, the Pope guides young people to the discovery of God's unconditional love for every man. “The Lord”, Francis writes, “chose someone who was persecuting him, completely hostile to him and his followers. We see that, in God's eyes, no one is lost. Thanks to a personal encounter with him, we can always start over again. No young person is ever beyond the reach of God's grace and mercy”.

Pope Francis offers some practical indications on how to “arise” and “testify” to the many peers they meet on the “roads to Damascus” of our time, including: “Arise! Testify to the love and respect it is possible to instill in human relationships” and “Arise! Testify that lives of failure can be rebuilt, that persons spiritually dead can rise anew”.

This year, for the first time, the local edition of World Youth Day will be celebrated on the Solemnity of Christ the King of the Universe.

The Dicastery for the Laity, the Family and Life has recently published the booklet on *Pastoral Guidelines for the Celebration of World Youth Day in the Particular Churches* (<http://www.laityfamilylife.va/content/laityfamilylife/en/GMGpastoralGuidelines.html>), which gathers the inspirations and the experience of the past WYD, in order to make the celebration of this Youth Day even more fruitful for the local communities and for ordinary youth ministry.

The next international edition of WYD will be celebrated in Lisbon in 2023 with the theme: “Mary arose and left with haste (*Lk 1:39*)”.

