All Young People are Ours!

REQUEST FOR INTERVENTION IN THE SYNOD HALL, 2018

Holy Father, in the first instance please accept my sincere and profound thanks for the gift you are giving to the Church by means of this Synod. There is no doubt that it is a time of grace and presence of the Holy Spirit.

Let me begin by telling you that I have imagined the Synod theme for myself as if we were talking about a pyramid. At the base lie ALL YOUNG PEOPLE. Halfway up are the young people on a journey of Faith, and at the top, young people who discern their calling, certainly a point to which many fewer arrive.

Allow me to tell you what happened to me the day before yesterday. When I left in the afternoon two young people, about 26 or 28 years old, asked me in Spanish: Excuse me, could you tell us why there are people going out dressed in coloured sashes and wearing something on their heads …?

- I immediately understood that they knew little or nothing about the Church and its Pastors. I understood that they did not know what a bishop was. So I explained what we are doing here. I told them that the Pope had called many people together to think about the young and also that many young people were taking part.

They asked me if they could see the Pope because they wanted very much to meet him. They told me that they had heard he was a “a man who was good to everyone”.

I saw that they were wearing a ring on their fingers. I asked them if they were engaged or already married. They told me they were married and had a three-year-old son. I asked them what their son’s name was and their face lit up. He is called Julian. I wished them all the best and said goodbye to these Colombian fiends of mine.

A strong conviction rang out in my heart: These too are ours!**ALL YOUNG PEOPLE ARE OURS**. There are not young people inside and young people outside.

I believe this is what we have to tell the world: that the Church and its Pastors feel that all young people in the world are THEIRS, OURS, so that nobody feels excluded. They need to feel that we accept them whatever their situation and their life stories.

Visiting Salesian presences around the world, I have seen many churches around the world filled because **they are filled with YOUNG MIGRANTS AND THEIR FAMILIES.**

I have seen this in Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal; I have seen it in California and New Zealand; in Melbourne and, without going too far away, in the Spain of my birth (with thousands and thousands of our Latin American brothers and sisters), and in Italy (with thousands of Filipinos in Rome and Turin).

And I say to myself: these are our young people with their families, who are also bringing the fresh air of Faith to our churches, at the same time that rejection, fears, intolerance and xenophobia are growing in our nations.

This is why I believe that speaking of the young as Church is IS TO SAY SOMETHING STRONG, DECISIVE AND DARING ON THEIR BEHALF IN ALL THE NATIONS OF OUR LOCAL CHURCHES**,** just as Pope Francis has done for the entire Universal Church. Because these migrant youth are even more fragile than all the others. Are we brave enough?

**Lastly,**our young people need to hear that **WE LOVE THEM, and that WE WANT TO MAKE A JOURNEY OF LIFE AND FAITH WITH THEM. Our young people need to feel our AFFECTIVE anf EFFECTIVE presence among them.**They need to sense that we neither want to direct their lives nor dictate how they should live, but that we want to share with them the best that we have which is: Jesus Christ the Lord.  They need to feel that we are here for them, if they allow us to be, sharing their joys and hopes, their happiness, pains and tears, their confusion or search for meaning, their vocation, their present and future.

They need to feel that**WE ARE WHISPERING GOD TO THEM**. We may not arrive at an excellent orthodoxy and orthopraxis, however they will sense, through our poor mediation, that **Jesus LOVES THEM AND ALWAYS ACCEPTS THEM.**It will then have all been worth it.

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Vatican, Aula Synod