

Dear young Canadian friends!

I'm happy to be able to spend a little time with you, participating in your dialogue, in which you are protagonists from the Atlantic to the Pacific. There are these marvels of technology that, if used positively, provide an opportunity for encounter and exchange unthinkable until recently.

This confirms that, when people work together looking for each other's good, the world reveals itself in all its beauty. I ask you, therefore, not to let the world be ruined by those without scruples, who only think about exploiting it and destroying it. I invite you to flood the places where you live with the joy and enthusiasm typical of your youthful age, to irrigate the world and history with the joy that comes from the Gospel, from having met a Person: Jesus, who has enthralled you and has drawn you to be with Him.

Do not let your youth be stolen from you. Do not allow anyone to slow and obscure the light that Christ puts in your face and in your heart. Be weavers of relationships signed by trust, by sharing, by openness even to ends of the world. Do not raise walls of division: do not raise walls of division! Build bridges, like this extraordinary one that you are crossing in spirit, and that links the shores of two oceans. You are experiencing a moment of intense preparation for the next Synod – the Synod of Bishops – that concerns you in a particular way, just as it involves the whole Christian community. In fact, its theme is “Young people, faith and vocational discernment”.

I also want to remind you of Jesus' words, those He said one day to the disciples who asked him, “Rabbi, where do you live?” And Jesus answered, “Come and see.” Jesus also turns His gaze on you and invites you to go to Him. Dear young people, have you encountered this gaze? Have you heard this voice? Have you felt that impulse to get up and be on the way? I am sure that, although din and dizziness seem to reign in the world, this call continues to resonate in your soul, to open it to full joy. This will be possible to the extent that you, through accompaniment of expert guides, undertake an itinerary of discernment in order to discover God's plan for your life: yours, yours, yours, and yours – the plan He has for the life of each one of you – even when your journey is marked by danger and missteps, God, rich in mercy, tenders His hand to pick you up again.

These words – I wrote them in the letter I sent to all the young people of the world on January 13th of this year, precisely in order to present the theme of the Synod. The world, the Church, are in need of courageous young people, who are not cowed in the face of difficulties, who face their trials and keep their eyes and hearts open to reality, so that no one should be rejected or subjected to injustice or to violence, or deprived private of human dignity.

I'm sure your heart – a young heart – will not be closed to the cry for help of so many of your peers who seek freedom, work, study, a chance to make sense of their lives. I count on your willingness, your commitment, your ability to face important challenges and dare to make the future, to take decisive steps along the path of change.

Young people, let Christ reach you. Let Him speak to you, embrace you, console you, heal your wounds, dissolve your doubts and fears – and you shall be ready for the fascinating adventure of life, that precious and inestimable gift that God places every day in your hands. Go to meet Jesus, be with

Him in prayer, entrust yourselves to Him, give your whole life over to His merciful love and your faith, and your faith will be the luminous witness of generosity and of the joy there is in following Him, wherever He should lead you.

Dear young people of Canada, my hope for you is that your meeting should be like that of the first disciples, that the beauty of a life realized in following the Lord might open wide before you. For this reason I entrust you to Mary of Nazareth, a young person like you, to whom God turned His loving gaze, that He might take you by the hand. Let yourselves be taken by Mary's, and let her guide you to the joy of saying a full and generous, "Here I am!"

Jesus watches you and awaits a "Here I am!" from each of you.

I bless you, I embrace you, and I greet you with affection while I ask you, please, to pray for me, so that I may be a faithful cooperator with your joy. Thank you.