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A Portuguese flag is seen near Pope Francis as he greets the crowd before celebrating Mass f

A Portuguese flag is seen near Pope Francis as he greets the crowd before celebrating Mass for World Youth Day pilgrims in Panama City in this Jan. 27, 2019, file photo. In his message for World Youth Day, the pope asked young people to be like Mary and "arise and go in haste" to share Jesus with others. World Youth Day will take place in Lisbon, Portugal, in August 2023, after being postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. (CNS photo/Alessandro Bianchi, Reuters)

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Like Mary, who after the Annunciation went in haste to visit her cousin Elizabeth, young Catholics are called to welcome Jesus into their lives and then to go out and share their joy with others, Pope Francis said.

"Mary is an example of a young person who wastes no time on seeking attention or the approval of others -- as often happens when we depend on our 'likes' on social media. She sets out to find the most genuine of all 'connections': the one that comes from encounter, sharing, love and service," the pope said in his message for World

Youth Day.

The Gospel of Luke's description of what Mary did after learning she would become the mother of Jesus -- "Mary arose and went with haste" to Elizabeth -- is the theme Francis chose for two WYD celebrations: on a local level Nov. 20, the feast of Christ the King, and for the world gathering in Lisbon, Portugal, Aug. 1-6, 2023.

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Lisbon gathering was postponed from 2022. Francis said he hoped many young Catholics would gather in the Portuguese city and that it would "represent a new beginning for you, the young, and -- with you -- for humanity as a whole."

In the Gospel story of the Visitation, the pope said, Mary "is a model for young people on the move, who refuse to stand in front of a mirror to contemplate themselves or to get caught up in the 'net.'"

"Mary's focus is always directed outward," he said. "She is the woman of Easter, in a permanent state of exodus, going forth from herself toward that great Other who is God and toward others, her brothers and sisters, especially those in greatest need, like her cousin Elizabeth."

Francis made it clear in the message that he was not urging "haste" as something simply rapid, which can lead to superficiality, but rather as an enthusiastic response to experiencing God's love and feeling an urgent need to share it.

"Even though the astonishing message of the angel had caused a seismic shift in her plans, the young Mary did not remain paralyzed, for within her was Jesus, the power of resurrection and new life," the pope said. "She arises and sets out, for she is certain that God's plan is the best plan for her life."

"Mary becomes a temple of God, an image of the pilgrim church, a church that goes forth for service, a church that brings the good news to all," Francis wrote.

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The movement is not for the sake of movement, but for the sake of those in need of the Gospel, of Jesus' love and of help or just a bit of kindness.

"What kinds of 'haste' do you have, dear young people?" the pope asked them. "What leads you to feel a need to get up and go, lest you end up standing still?"

"Many people -- in the wake of realities like the pandemic, war, forced migration, poverty, violence and climate disasters -- are asking themselves: Why is this happening to me? Why me? And why now?" he said. "But the real question in life is instead: For whom am I living?"

No individual can solve all the world's problems, he said, but each person can do something to help people nearby, whether a member of the family, the school or the community.

And, the pope said, "when faced with concrete and urgent needs, we need to act quickly. How many people in our world look forward to a visit from someone who is concerned about them! How many of the elderly, the sick, the imprisoned and refugees have need of a look of sympathy, a visit from a brother or sister who scales the walls of indifference!"

The haste Christianity calls for is different from the "unhealthy haste, which can drive us to live superficially and to take everything lightly, without commitment or concern, without investing ourselves in what we do," the pope said.

Unhealthy haste, he said, is seen in those "who live, study, work and socialize without any real personal investment," which can happen "in families, when we never stop to listen and spend time with others" or "in friendships, when we expect our friends to keep us entertained and fulfill our needs, but immediately look the other way if we see that they are troubled and need our time and help."

Expressing his hope that many young people would attend World Youth Day in Lisbon and experience that community "after a long period of social distancing and isolation," Francis told young people to cultivate healthy haste.

"Let us carry Jesus within our hearts and bring him to all those whom we meet," he said. "In this beautiful season of your lives, press ahead and do not postpone all the good that the Holy Spirit can accomplish in you! With affection, I bless your dreams and every step of your journey."