



## *With young people, from the heart of the world to the heart of God*

*Young people, the hope of the Church*

Dear sisters

On several occasions recently, I have lamented the social climate in which young people find themselves today. It is a climate of insecurity and violence, disappointment and corruption... very different, in general, from the one we experienced when we were young in the last decades of the last century.

Reflection has led me to some figures in the Bible who did not necessarily live in better times and who, as young people, were able to hear the voice of God and carry out daring and risky tasks, collaborating with the history that God was writing. They were His instruments in the work of redemption, and their testimonies continue to be valuable for young people today. Can we bring them closer to you?

Let us remember here a few of those who made history. And not just any history. With them, God was able to compose the history of salvation. It is highly likely that today the Lord is looking for young people to extend his Kingdom. Shall we collaborate with him?

A very famous example is that of Joseph, son of Jacob. Rejected and sold by his brothers, he became governor of Egypt and administrator of the country's wealth. From a young age, he had the gift of interpreting dreams, which put him in the right place to save his family, the tribes of Jacob, and the future people of Israel from famine.

David the shepherd, a man 'after God's own heart' (Acts 13:22). Anointed by the prophet Samuel at a very young age, he became the most important king in the history of Israel. He received the messianic promise and is a central link in the genealogy of Jesus.

A young Hebrew woman of unknown name is at the origin of the healing of Naaman, the Syrian. She served the military man's wife and said to her mistress, 'If only my master could go to the prophet in Samaria, he would cure him of his leprosy.' And the faith of this girl prompted the miracle of Elisha (2 Kings 5:1-14).

King Josiah was 16 years old when, during repairs to the Temple, the Book of the Law was found. He undertook a reform, an attempt at religious and moral restoration after years of idolatry and decadence, which strengthened the national and religious identity of the kingdom of Judah.

The prophet Jeremiah was known for his youth, which he himself declared: 'Lord, I cannot speak, for I am only a boy.' He endured with unwavering fortitude the difficulties and accusations he suffered at the hands of his detractors. Despite facing opposition and persecution, Jeremiah remained steadfast in his calling, preaching about the importance of justice, obedience to God, and repentance. His ministry lasted more than 40 years.

Mary of Nazareth, a simple young woman, was chosen for a great mission, which she accepted with faith, confidence, and poise. Her example of faith, obedience, and humility highlights the essential role of women in God's plan. As a mother, she accompanied her son from birth to crucifixion. And after Jesus' ascension, she was part of the community of believers gathered to pray and wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit.

These examples, among many others, are models for young people of all times. God guides history and is always calling collaborators to advance the Kingdom He is building. The ministry of accompanying young people makes us witnesses of that call. It asks us to listen to their experiences, to welcome their concerns and doubts without judgement or condemnation, and to perceive there, with them, the passage of God in their lives.

It is essential that we ask ourselves: Where are young people today? Who are they? What are they like? What are they looking for? It is essential that we believe in them and that each young person raises more questions than answers in us. What do young people expect from those who accompany them? What are young people today asking of us, through their own language, their fears and their loneliness?

Pope Francis said to young university students in Lisbon in 2023, 'Don't be administrators of fears, but entrepreneurs of dreams!' Shall we accompany them?

Embrace you with affection.