

**VIDEO MESSAGE OF HIS EXCELLENCY
ARCHBISHOP CHRISTOPHE PIERRE, APOSTOLIC NUNCIO
TO PARTICIPANTS AT THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC YOUTH CONFERENCE
LONG BEACH, CALIFORNIA
NOVEMBER 11, 2022**

Dear Friends in Christ,

I very warmly greet each one of you gathered in Long Beach, California, this week for the National Catholic Youth Conference. A special greeting goes, of course, to the many young people who have traveled from every part of the country to join this wonderful event. I thank too your parents and chaperones who have traveled with you. I am immensely grateful for the hard work of the organizers of this event, coordinated by the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry. I do want to express my gratitude to all who work in youth ministry: you have the challenging, but joyful task, of accompanying young people in their search for meaning and truth, which we know is found, in its fulness, only in the person of Jesus Christ. Thank you for helping our young people grow in faith, in hope, and in love.

This year's Conference has the inspired title: Walking on Water! I do not know if large groups of Catholic young people have been spotted off the Californian coast, nimbly striding over the waves; but I do know that this theme is intended as an invitation to trust: just as Peter trusted enough to step out of the boat and walk on the water, so we are invited to see how our lives can be transformed once we put our hand in the hand of Jesus and let him carry us through the turbulent waters of life. With our hand in his, we cannot be dragged down to the watery depths. There are, alas, many voices in our culture that seek precisely to drag us down: down into the morass of complacency; of compromise with sin; of despondency about the future; of unthinking conformity to arbitrary constructs.

Well, I have a secret to share with you my dear young friends: it is faith in Jesus Christ that liberates us from such narrow and the fear-filled visions; it is hope in his promise of eternal life that transforms this world into something much bigger than it would otherwise be; it is love of Christ that purifies our hearts and makes them large enough to embrace others.

So, during these privileged days, take heart! The Lord leads us by the hand, across the turbulent seas of life, toward the safe harbor of eternity. And when we are tossed about on those seas – for difficulties in life are unavoidable – we must continually listen for those consoling words that Jesus speaks, as he walks on the water towards the boat of his frightened disciples: *“Take courage! It is I. Do not be afraid.”* How we need to inscribe those words on our hearts! *“Do not be afraid!”* The antidote to fear is faith; a faith that does not disappoint or delude.

Speaking to young people in Bahrain just a few days ago, Pope Francis said:

“Well, my advice is to press forward without fear, but never go it alone! Two things: press forward without fear and never alone! God never leaves you alone; he waits for you to ask him to give you

a hand. He accompanies and guides us ... Let us cultivate in prayer the consoling certainty that the Lord watches over us, that he does not grow tired, but constantly watches out for us and keeps us safe."

(Pope Francis, Meeting with Youth, Awali, 5 November 2022)

Queridos jóvenes, es una alegría el poder unirme a ustedes por medio de este video mensaje. Rezo para que estos días les ofrezcan un verdadero encuentro con Cristo resucitado y que profundicen la convicción de que Él camina con ustedes a lo largo de sus vidas llevándolos hacia las serenas aguas de la eternidad. Escuchen su voz que dice: "¡No tengas miedo!".