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## **Montse: an Example for Young People**

For the upcoming Synod of Bishops on "Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment," Venerable Montse Grases is highlighted on the Synod's webpage as an example of fruitful self-giving to God.

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The Pope announced in January 13, 2017, in his letter to young people, that in October 2018 the Synod of the Bishops will meet to discuss the topic

“Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment.”

He reminded young people of God's words to Abraham: “Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you” (*Gen 12:1*). “These words are now also addressed to you. They are words of a Father who invites you to ‘go,’ to set out towards a future which is unknown but one which will surely lead to fulfilment, a future towards which He Himself accompanies you. I invite you to hear God's voice resounding in your heart through the breath of the Holy Spirit,” the Pope said.

As the upcoming Synod is focused on youth in today's world, the official website of the Synod has examples of young people who fearlessly have given themselves to God and followed him. They are witnesses to the effort to live out fully the call to

holiness that all Christians have received through baptism.

Some of these witnesses are canonized young people such as Saint Maria Goretti, who died a martyr to defend her purity; Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, whose spiritual biography has guided many young people closer to Christ; Saint Kateri Tekawitha, a Native American from the Mohawk tribe who until her death at age 24 was an example of faith lived in a mostly pagan setting; Saint Pedro Calungsod, patron for catechists; and Saint José Sánchez del Río, who died a martyr at age 14.

Other witnesses proposed by the Synod's webpage are people whose cause of canonization is still open. There are also testimonies from young people who are still alive, such as Jade Banks, a young girl in her 20s who joined the Carmelites last November.

As an example of sainthood in ordinary life the site highlights the life of Montse Grases (1941-1959), a girl from Barcelona and member of Opus Dei. She was a typical girl of her age who loved sports (especially basketball and tennis), music, popular dances and acting in plays. She met Opus Dei in the 50s and regularly attended an Opus Dei center, where she deepened her life of prayer. After praying for months about what Jesus wanted from her, she decided to join Opus Dei on Christmas Eve 1957.

From that day on Montse strove with all her effort to find God in the fulfilment of her daily duties and in caring for small details out of love. A few months later she was diagnosed with cancer. It caused Montse intense pain, which she accepted with serenity and faith. In spite of her sickness, she never lost her contagious cheerfulness or capacity

for making friends. She brought many of her friends closer to God. Many people witnessed her progressive union with God and the way in which she transformed her suffering into prayer and apostolate. One of her friends says that when she saw her praying, she could sense Montse's closeness to Christ. Her mortal remains are kept in the Oratory of Santa María de Bonaigua in Barcelona, where many people go to pray to her intercession. A large number of favours and graces have been attributed to Montse's intercession. In 2016 Pope Francis approved the decree that declared that Montse lived the virtues to a heroic degree and recognized her fame for holiness.

For a novena for Montse's intercession, click on the image below:

To prepare for the Synod, the Pope has encouraged all the faithful to pray for the fruit of the meeting. Pope Francis offered the following prayer:

*Lord Jesus in journeying towards the Synod, your Church turns her attention to all the young people of the world. We pray that they might boldly take charge of their lives, aim for the most beautiful and profound things of life and always keep their hearts unencumbered.*

*Accompanied by wise and generous guides, help them respond to the call you make to each of them, to realize a proper plan of life and achieve happiness. Keep their hearts open to dreaming great dreams and make them concerned for the good of others.*

*Like the Beloved Disciple, may they stand at the foot of the Cross, to receive your Mother as a gift from*

*you. May they be witnesses to your Resurrection and be aware that you are at their side as they joyously proclaim you as Lord.*

*Amen.*

## **Pope's Letter to Young People**

*My Dear Young People,*

I am pleased to announce that in October 2018 a Synod of Bishops will take place to treat the topic: “Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment.” I wanted you to be the centre of attention, because you are in my heart. Today, the Preparatory Document is being presented, a document which I am also entrusting to you as your “compass” on this synodal journey.

I am reminded of the words which God spoke to Abraham: “Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I

will show you” (*Gen* 12.1). These words are now also addressed to you. They are words of a Father who invites you to “go,” to set out towards a future which is unknown but one which will surely lead to fulfilment, a future towards which He Himself accompanies you. I invite you to hear God's voice resounding in your heart through the breath of the Holy Spirit.

When God said to Abram, “Go!”, what did he want to say? He certainly did not say to distance himself from his family or withdraw from the world. Abram received a compelling invitation, a challenge, to leave everything and go to a new land. What is this “new land” for us today, if not a more just and friendly society which you, young people, deeply desire and wish to build to the very ends of the earth?

But unfortunately, today, “Go!” also has a different meaning, namely, that

of abuse of power, injustice and war. Many among you are subjected to the real threat of violence and forced to flee their native land. Their cry goes up to God, like that of Israel, when the people were enslaved and oppressed by Pharaoh (cf. *Ex* 2:23).

I would also remind you of the words that Jesus once said to the disciples who asked him: “Teacher . . . where are you staying?” He replied, “Come and see” (*Jn* 1:38). Jesus looks at you and invites you to go with him. Dear young people, have you noticed this look towards you? Have you heard this voice? Have you felt this urge to undertake this journey? I am sure that, despite the noise and confusion seemingly prevalent in the world, this call continues to resonate in the depths of your heart so as to open it to joy in its fullness. This will be possible to the extent that, even with professional guides, you will learn how to undertake a journey of

discernment to discover God's plan in your life. Even when the journey is uncertain and you fall, God, rich in mercy, will extend his hand to pick you up.

In Krakow, at the opening of the last World Youth Day, I asked you several times: “Can we change things?” And you shouted: “yes!” That shout came from your young and youthful hearts, which do not tolerate injustice and cannot bow to a “throw-away culture” nor give in to the globalization of indifference. Listen to the cry arising from your inner selves! Even when you feel, like the prophet Jeremiah, the inexperience of youth, God encourages you to go where He sends you: “Do not be afraid . . . because I am with you to deliver you” (*Jer* 1:8).

A better world can be built also as a result of your efforts, your desire to change and your generosity. Do not

be afraid to listen to the Spirit who proposes bold choices; do not delay when your conscience asks you to take risks in following the Master. The Church also wishes to listen to your voice, your sensitivities and your faith; even your doubts and your criticism. Make your voice heard, let it resonate in communities and let it be heard by your shepherds of souls. St. Benedict urged the abbots to consult, even the young, before any important decision, because “the Lord often reveals to the younger what is best” (*Rule of St. Benedict*, III, 3).

Such is the case, even in the journey of this Synod. My brother bishops and I want even more to “work with you for your joy” (2 *Cor* 1:24). I entrust you to Mary of Nazareth, a young person like yourselves, whom God beheld lovingly, so she might take your hand and guide you to the joy of fully and generously

responding to God's call with the words: "Here I am" (cf. *Lk* 1:38).

With paternal affection,

Francis

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