



Pope Francis commits the Church to listening to young people, “no one excluded”, in preparation for the October Synod of Bishops on the theme: Youth, faith and vocational discernment.

### **By Seàn-Patrick Lovett**

Pope Francis opened the Pre-Synodal meeting in Rome on Monday with a provocation: “Too often we talk about young people without asking what they think”, he said. There are those, said the Pope, who tend to “idolize” youth, and others who prefer to keep young people “at a safe distance”, rather than allowing them to be the protagonists of their own futures.

### **The contribution of young people**

The Pope cited examples of God speaking through young people in the Bible: Samuel, David and Daniel, for example. He told those present that the Church needs them: “You have been invited as representatives of the young people of the world because your contribution is indispensable”, he said. This is because the upcoming Synod is also, in the Pope’s words: “An appeal to the Church to rediscover a renewed youthful dynamism”.

### **Examples from the online questionnaire**

Pope Francis said he had personally read some of the emails regarding the questionnaire posted online by the Synod Secretariat and had been struck by the responses of many of the young people. “One girl observed that young people lack points of reference and that no one encourages them to activate the resources they have”. The same unnamed respondent went on to highlight the dangers faced by young people today and concluded with the appeal: “Help our youthful world that is increasingly falling apart”. The Pope described this girl’s cry as sincere and requiring attention. “The Church”, he said, “must learn new ways of presence and closeness”.

## Risking and daring

Pope Francis reminded young people that, along this journey, we need to “dare new paths, even if it involves risks”. “We must risk”, he said, “because love knows how to risk. Without risking, a young person ages, and the Church also ages. That is why we need you young people, living stones of a Church with a young face”. The Pope concluded by inviting young people to express themselves “frankly and freely”. “You are the protagonists”, he insisted, “and it is important that you speak openly. I assure you that your contribution will be taken seriously”