



*Good afternoon Holy Father and Synod Fathers, and a special good afternoon to all the lay people present here today, especially all of the lay young people. We are a valuable voice of the Church, and I am very grateful for this opportunity to share my voice with you all now.*

*In the past 8 years of my life, I have been privileged to work with young people in schools and parishes, lead youth groups, facilitate retreats and train youth ministers. Throughout all of this, however, one thing that has remained very close to my heart is music ministry.*

*As a fourteen-year-old, I attended one of my first music practices at my local parish, with my saxophone in hand, excited to be able to share my gift of music. I quickly learned, however, that if I wanted to be able to play alongside the youth choir, I would have to learn to play by listening. One of my youth ministers quickly came to my aid, supporting me and giving me the tools to learn how to do this. He later told me that one of the people who had given him these same tools years earlier, was in fact my deceased grandfather.*

*Many things happened in this moment. Firstly, I was invited into a space where I wasn't judged for playing ability, and it was okay if I made mistakes. A space where I was able to share my music and know that it was truly being listened to, and even adding to sound that, as a whole, we were creating.*

*The church needs to create similar spaces, where young people can voice their opinions, their hopes, their needs and their struggles, without being judged. The Church, like I had to, must learn to use its ears, to listen to the world around it, to listen to what is required of it, and most importantly, to listen to the voices of young people, because we have something offer.*

*Secondly, I was invited into relationship with a person, in which I was accompanied in my musical growth. I was not expected to know anything more than I already knew, and I was encouraged to learn at my own pace. It was in the context of this relationship that I developed a desire to know more.*

*The Church, similarly, needs to accompany young people, providing them with opportunities to encounter Christ, and inviting them into personal relationship with him. The Instrumentum Labouris speaks of 'a more relational church', but too often, we try to teach young people the rules, before we introduce them to the person of Jesus Christ.*

*Thirdly, I was led and mentored by a young person, who had been empowered to do so by my grandfather. In this space, I was encouraged not only to learn, but to help lead the congregation through my music, and to lead other young musicians when I was capable.*

*The Church must empower young people, giving them the opportunity and tools to lead at all levels. We young people bring with us a visible sense of joy, hope and enthusiasm, and it is these things that the Church currently needs. The Church must open its doors and become a Church that is led not only by the ordained, but by all of us, together and alongside one another.*

*I say these things today as a reflection of my own experiences of the Church. I have been fortunate to experience a Church that has listened to me, where I have been accompanied and led by many people, religious and lay alike, and where I have been given countless opportunities to lead as a young person myself.*

*This experience of the Church is one that should be shared by all young people, but it is often the exception, rather than the normal.*

*I stand here today asking you to see me as an example of what can be done when the Church enters into authentic relationship with young people, accompanies them through their lives, learns from them, allows them to use their God-given potential, and invites them to encounter and enter into personal relationship with Jesus Christ.*

*Sebastian Duhau, Australian Auditor*