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OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE



BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIEGE
PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHL

BOLLETTINO

SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

N. 161020b

Thursday 20.10.2016

The Pope to the Augustinian Recollects: be men of hope

This morning in the Clementine Hall the Holy Father received the sixty members of the 55th General Chapter of the Order of Augustinian Recollects, the theme of which is a prayer of St. Augustine: "All my hope lies in Your great mercy. Command what You will and give what You command". This invocation, affirmed Francis, leads to being "men of hope, capable of placing all our trust in God's mercy, aware that we are incapable of facing alone with our own strength the challenges that the Lord proposes to us. We are small and unworthy, but God is our security and joy; He never disappoints us and He is the one Who leads us on mysterious paths with fatherly love".

In their General Chapter, the Augustinians wished to revise and put before God the life of the Order, with its hopes and challenges, so that it is He Who gives them light and hope. As the Pope observed, "to seek renewal and impetus it is necessary to turn to God, and to ask Him, 'give what You command'. We asked for the new commandment that Jesus gave us: 'A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another' and it is what we implore: His love so as to be able to love. ... God is always giving us this love and He is always present in our life. Let us look to the past and give thanks for the many gifts received". We take this historical perspective, Pope Francis emphasised, in the hand of the Lord, because it is He Who gives us the key to interpret it; it is not about no longer making history, but rather discovering the presence of the Lord in every detail, in every step of life. The past helps us to return again to the charism and to appreciate it in all its freshness and fullness. It also gives us the possibility of underlining the difficulties that have emerged, and how they can be overcome, so as to face current challenges, looking to the future. This journey alongside Jesus becomes a prayer of thanksgiving and inner purification".

The grateful memory of this love in the past "impels us to live the present with passion and with ever greater courage; then we can ask, 'Command what you will'. To ask this implies freedom of spirit and willingness. Allowing oneself to be commanded by God means that He is the master of our life and that we have no other; and we know well that if God does not occupy His rightful place, others will do so. When the Lord is the centre of our life, everything is possible; there can be no failure, nor any other evil, because He is at the centre, and it is He Who guides us".

In this special moment, He asks us to be His "creators of communion". We are called to create, with our presence in the midst of the world, a society able to recognise the dignity of each person and to share the gift

that each person is for the other. With our witness of community, living and open to what the Lord sends us, through the breath of His Spirit, we can respond to the needs of every person with the same love with which God has loved us. Many people are waiting for us to reach out to them and to look at them with the same tenderness we have experienced and received from our encounter with God. This is the power we bring: not our own ideals and projects, but rather the strength of His mercy that transforms and gives life”.

Francis concluded his discourse by inviting the participants in the Chapter to uphold with renewed spirit St. Augustine’s dream of living as “brothers with one heart and one soul, that reflects the ideal of the first Christians and is the living prophecy of communion in this world of ours, so that there is no division, conflict or exclusion, but that instead harmony and dialogue may reign”. He commended the intentions and projects of the Order to the protection of Our Lady, that she might guide and protect them, asking them to pray for him and to transmit his blessing to the whole Augustinian Recollect family.
