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The Pope receives the National Anti-Mafia and Anti-Terrorism Directorate: the phenomenon of the Mafia is radically opposed to faith and the Gospel

The Holy Father received in audience this morning the members of the National Anti-Mafia and Anti-Terrorism Directorate (DNAA), led by Franco Roberti. In his address to the entity, to which the Italian state has charged the prosecution of crimes by the three large organised crime networks – the Mafia, Camorra and 'Ndrangheta, the Pope commented that “economic, social and political deficiencies, which these organisations exploit, provide a fertile terrain for them to realise their deplorable plans. Among your competencies there is also the fight against terrorism, which is increasingly assuming a cosmopolitan and devastating aspect”.

“I wish to express my appreciation and my encouragement for your work, which is difficult and risky but more indispensable than ever before for the redemption and liberation from the power of criminal associations, which are responsible for violence and abuse stained with human blood. Society needs to be healed of corruption, extortion, the illicit trafficking of drugs and weapons, and the trafficking of human beings, including many children reduced to slavery. They are genuine social scourges and at the same time global challenges that the international community is called to face with determination”.

The Pope highlighted that the activity of the DNAA is carried out in collaboration with colleagues in other states, and that this work, due to the synergy and effectiveness of the means used, provides an effective barrier and a measure of security for the community, which trusts in the capability and the experience of the magistrates engaged in combating and eradicating organised crime. “I urge you to make every effort especially in countering human trafficking and the smuggling of migrants: these are extremely grave crimes which afflict the weakest of the weak. In this regard, it is necessary to increase activity in protecting victims, guaranteeing legal and social assistance to these, our brothers and sisters in search of peace and a future. Those who flee their own countries as a result of war, violence and persecution have a right to receive an adequate reception and suitable protection in countries that define themselves as civilised”.

To complement and reinforce the work of the DNAA there is a need for “long-term educational initiatives, addressed in particular to the new generations. To this end, the various educational agencies, including families, schools, Christian communities, sports and cultural associations, are called to promote an awareness of morality and legality indicating models of honest, peaceful and fraternal life that gradually defeat evil and pave the way for good. This means starting from consciences, to re-orientate the intentions, choices and attitudes of

individuals, so that the social fabric becomes open to hope in a better world".

"The mafia phenomenon, as an expression of the culture of death, is to be challenged and combated. It is radically opposed to faith and to the Gospel, which are always in favour of life. Those who follow Christ have thoughts of peace, fraternity, justice, welcome and forgiveness. When the lymph of the Gospel flows in the disciple of Christ, good fruits ripen which are easily recognised also from the outside, with corresponding behaviour that the apostle Paul identified as 'love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control'".

The Holy Father went on to mention the many parishes and Catholic associations that are "witnesses to these fruits", and which carry out commendable work "aimed at the promotion of the people, a cultural and social promotion with the objective of progressively uprooting the evil weed of organised crime and corruption. In these initiatives, the closeness of the Church is also made manifest to those who live in dramatic situations, and who need to be helped to escape the spiral of violence and to regenerate themselves in hope".

"May the Lord always give you the strength to go ahead, not to be discouraged, but instead to continue to fight against corruption, violence, the mafia and terrorism. I am aware of the fact that your work involves risks to your life – this I know – and the risk of other dangers for you and for your families", the Pope affirmed. "Therefore, it requires extra passion, the sense of duty and fortitude and also, from us, all the citizens who benefit from your work, extra support, prayer and closeness. I assure you that I am very close to you, in your work, and I pray for you. At the same time, may the Lord, just and merciful, touch the heart of the men and women of the various mafias, so that they pause, stop doing evil, convert and change their lives. The money of the dirty deals of mafia crimes is stained with blood, and produces iniquitous power. We are all aware that the devil enters 'through the pockets': the first corruption is there".

The Pope ended by blessing the members of the DNAA and their families, invoking the strength of the Lord and at the same time reiterating his closeness, and asked them to pray for him.
