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Audience with participants in the General Chapter of the Congregation of the Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ (Resurrectionists)

At 11.30 this morning, in the Consistory Hall of the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the participants in the 32nd General Chapter of the Congregation of the Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ (Resurrectionists) taking place in Rome from 11 to 25 June 2017 on the theme: *"Witnesses of the Presence of the Risen Lord: from Community to the World"*.

The following is the Pope's address to those present:

Holy Father's Address

Dear Brothers,

I am pleased to receive you on the occasion of your General Chapter. I thank the Superior General for his kind words, and through you, I greet all your confrères present in fifteen countries on four continents.

As spiritual sons of Bogdan Janski, the apostle of Polish émigrés in France in the nineteenth century, you were founded in order to testify that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is at the basis of the Christian life, to proclaim the need for personal resurrection, and to support the community in its mission of service to the Kingdom of God. In close connection to the charism of the Institute, you have chosen as the theme of this Chapter: *Witnesses of the Presence of the Risen Lord: from Community to the World*. I would like to reflect with you on three particular phrases.

1. *Witnesses of the Presence of the Risen Lord*. In a word, missionaries, apostles of the Living One. In this regard, I would propose to you as an icon Mary Magdalene, the apostle to the apostles. On Easter morn, having encountered the risen Jesus, she proclaimed Him to the other disciples. She sought Jesus dead and found Him alive. This is the joyful Good News she brought to the others: Christ is alive and He has the power to conquer death and bestow eternal life.

This brings us to a first reflection. Nostalgia for a past that was rich in vocations and impressive achievements must not prevent you from seeing the life that the Lord is causing to blossom, today too, in your midst. Do not yield to nostalgia, but be men who, moved by faith in the God of history and of life, proclaim the coming of the dawn amid the darkness of the night (cf. *Is* 21:11-12). Men of contemplation, who, with the eyes of the heart fixed on the Lord, can see what others, caught up in the concerns of this world, cannot. Men capable of proclaiming, with the boldness born of the Spirit, that Jesus Christ is alive and is Lord.

A second reflection is this. Mary Magdalene and the other women who went to the tomb that morning (cf. *Lk* 24:1-8) were women “on the move”: they abandoned their “nest” and set out; they took a risk. The Spirit is calling you too, Brothers of the Resurrection, to be men who set out, to be an Institute “on the move” towards every human periphery, wherever the light of the Gospel needs to be brought. The Spirit is calling you to be seekers of the face of God wherever it is to be found: not in the tombs – “Why do you look for the living among the dead?” (v. 5) – but where it lives: in the community and in mission.

2. From Community to the World. Like the disciples of Emmaus, allow the Risen One to walk at your side, both as individuals and in community, especially along the path of disappointment and abandonment (cf. *Lk* 24:11ff.). This encounter will make you run once more, filled with joy and without delay, to the community, and from the community to the entire world, in order to tell others that “The Lord is risen indeed!” (v. 34).

Those who believe in the Risen One have the courage to “go forth” and bring to others the Good News of the resurrection, embracing the risks of testimony, even as the Apostles did. How many people are waiting for this joyful proclamation! It is not right for us to deprive them of it. If the resurrection of Christ is our greatest certainty and our most precious treasure, how can we not run to proclaim it to others?

A concrete way of showing this is fraternal life in community. It entails accepting the brothers the Lord has given us: not those whom we choose, but those the Lord has given us. As the Apostle Paul tells us, now that Christ has risen from the dead, we can no longer look at others from a human point of view (cf. *2 Cor* 5:16). We view them and we accept them as a gift from the Lord. Others are a gift not to be taken for granted or looked down upon, but a gift to be received with respect, because in our brothers, especially if they are weak and frail, Christ comes to meet us.

I urge you to be builders of evangelical communities and not merely their “consumers”. I ask you to make fraternal life in community your primary form of evangelization. May communities be open to mission and flee every form of self-absorption, which leads to death. Do not let problems – for problems will always be there – overwhelm you. Instead, cultivate the mysticism of encounter and, together with the brothers the Lord has given you, as you dwell “in the light of the loving relationship of the three divine Persons”, seek ways and means to move forward (cf. *Apostolic Letter To All Consecrated People*, 21 November 2014, I, 2). In a society that tends to reduce everything to flat uniformity, where injustice gives rise to divisions and hostility, in a world torn and aggressive, ensure that the witness of fraternal life and community will never be lacking!

3. Prophets of joy and of Easter hope. The Risen Lord poured out upon His disciples two forms of consolation: interior joy and the light of the paschal mystery. The joy of recognizing the presence of the Risen Jesus draws you into His Person and His will: for this very reason, it leads to mission. The light of the paschal mystery brings new hope, a “trustworthy hope”, as Pope Benedict XVI has said (*Spe Salvi*, 2). Risen in order to enable others to rise, set free in order to bring freedom to others, born to new life in order to bring new life to birth in everyone who crosses our path: this is your vocation and mission as Brothers of the Resurrection.

“Why do you look for the living among the dead?” (*Lk* 24:5). May these words continually resound in your hearts. They will help you to overcome moments of sadness and will open before you horizons of joy and hope. They will enable you to shatter tombstones, and give you the strength to proclaim the Good News in this culture so often marked by death. If we have the courage to descend to our personal and community tombs, we will see how Jesus can make us rise from them. This will enable us to rediscover the joy, the happiness and the passion of those moments when we first made of our lives a gift to God and others.

Dear brothers, I conclude by repeating something I have often said to consecrated persons, especially during the Year of Consecrated Life: remember the past with gratitude, live the present with passion, and embrace the future with hope. A grateful memory of the past: not archaeology, because charism is always a wellspring of living water, not a bottle of distilled water. A passion for maintaining ever alive and young our first love, Who is Jesus. Hope, in the knowledge that Jesus is with us and guides our steps, even as He guided the steps of our founders.

May Mary, who in a singular way experienced and continues to experience the mystery of her Son's Resurrection, watch over your journey with a Mother's love. I give all of you my blessing. And I ask you, please, not to forget to pray for me. Thank you.
