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Pastoral Visit of the Holy Father Francis to Cesena on the third centenary of the birth of Pope Pius VI, and Bologna for the conclusion of the diocesan Eucharistic Congress – Meeting with citizens in Cesena

At 7.00 this morning, the Holy Father Francis left from the Vatican heliport for his pastoral visit to Cesena on the third centenary of the birth of Pope Pius VI, and Bologna for the conclusion of the diocesan Eucharistic Congress.

Upon arrival at the heliport, near the hippodrome of Cesena, the Pope was welcomed by H.E. Msgr. Douglas Regattieri, bishop of Cesena-Sarsina, Fulvio Rocco de Marinis, prefect of Forlì-Cesena, Davide Drei, president of the province of Forlì-Cesena, and Paolo Lucchi, mayor of Cesena.

The Holy Father travelled straight to Piazza del Popolo, where at 8.10 the meeting with the citizenry took place. This was followed by an exchange of gifts with the mayor.

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

Address of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters,

I like the fact I am beginning my visit to Cesena by meeting citizens, in this place that is so meaningful to the civil and social life of your city. A city rich in history and civilization, whose illustrious children also included two Popes: Pius VI, the third centenary of whose birth we remember, and Pius VII.

For centuries this square has constituted the meeting point of citizens and the place where the market was held. Its name, Piazza del Popolo, derives from this; it is more simply known as “the square”, because it belongs to the people, the public space where decisions relevant for the city were taken in its Town Hall, and where

economic and social initiatives were undertaken. The square is an emblematic place, where the aspirations of individuals met with the needs, expectations and dreams of the entire citizenry; where particular groups become aware that their wishes must be harmonised with those of the collective. I would say – allow me this image – in this square the common good of all is moulded; here one works for the common good of all. This harmonisation of one's own desires with those of the community forms the common good. In this square it is learned that, without pursuing the common good with consistency, effort and intelligence, even individuals are unable to claim their rights and realise their most noble aspirations, as the ordered and civil space in which they live and work would be reduced.

The centrality of the square thus conveys the message that it is essential for us all to work together for the common good. This is the foundation of the good governance of the city, which makes it beautiful, healthy and welcoming, a crossroads of initiatives and the motor of sustainable and integral development.

This square, like all the other squares in Italy, recalls the need, for the life of the community, for *good politics*; not that which serves individual ambitions or the arrogance of factions or centres of interests. A political life that is neither servant nor master, but rather a friend and collaborator; neither fearful nor averse, but rather responsible and therefore courageous and prudent at the same time; that increases the involvement of the people, their progressive inclusion and participation; that does leave some categories at the margins, that does not sack and pollute natural resources; indeed these are not a bottomless pit but rather a treasure given to us by God to be used with intelligence and respect. A political life that knows how to harmonise the legitimate aspirations of individuals and groups, keeping the rudder firmly orientated towards the interest of the citizenry as a whole.

This is the authentic face of politics and its reason for existence: an inestimable service to the good of the entire collective. And this is the reason why the social doctrine of the Church considers it a noble form of charity. I therefore invite the young, and not so young, to prepare themselves adequately and commit themselves personally in this field, thus adopting from the outset the perspective of the common good and rejecting even the slightest form of corruption. Corruption is the woodworm of the political vocation. Corruption does not allow civilisation to grow. And the good politician bears his own cross when he wants to be good, because he must very often set aside his own personal ideas in order to take the initiatives of others and harmonise them, bring them together, so that it is indeed the common good that is carried ahead. In this sense, the good politician always ends up being a “martyr” to service, because he sets aside his own ideas but does not abandon them; he brings them into discussion with all to go towards the common good, and this is very good.

From this square I invite you to consider the nobility of political action on behalf and in favour of the people, who recognise themselves in a shared history and values and ask for tranquillity in life and orderly development. I invite you demand from the protagonists of public life coherent efforts, preparation, moral righteousness, capacity for initiative, farsightedness, patience and strength of heart in facing today's challenges, without however claiming an impossible perfection. And when a politician makes a mistake, may he have the strength of heart to say: “I made a mistake, I am sorry, let's move on”. And this is noble! Human and historic events and the complexity of problems do not permit everything to be resolved, and immediately. The magic wand does not work in politics! A healthy realism knows that even the best political class cannot resolve all issues in a flash. To be aware of this it is enough to act in person instead of limiting oneself to observing and criticising other people's work from the balcony. And this is a fault, when criticism is not constructive. If a politician makes a mistake, tell him, there are many ways of telling him: “But, I think that this would be better in this way, that way...”. And do not watch from the balcony, observe from the balcony waiting for him to fail. No, this does not construct civil life. We will thus find the strength to assume our responsibilities, at the same time understanding that, even with God's help and the collaboration of men, mistakes will be made. We all make mistakes. “I am sorry, I made a mistake. Let's get back on the right track and carry on”.

Dear brothers and sisters, this city, like all of Romagna, has traditionally been an arena of heightened political passions. I would like to say to you, and to everyone: rediscover today too the value of this essential dimension of civil coexistence and make your contribution, ready to make good of all prevail over that of one side; ready to acknowledge that every idea must be confirmed and remodelled through comparison with reality; ready to acknowledge that it is fundamental to undertake initiatives by generating extensive collaborations rather than focusing on the specific roles. Be demanding with yourselves and with others, knowing that conscientious effort

preceded by suitable preparation will bear fruit and increase the good and even the happiness of people. Listen to everyone, everyone has the right to make his voice heard, but listen especially to the young and the elderly. The young, because they have the strength to carry things ahead, and the elderly, because they have the wisdom of life, and they have the authority to say to the young – young politicians too – “Listen, you are mistaken in this, take another route, think about it”. This relationship between the elderly and the young is a treasure that we must restore. Today is the time of the young? Yes, half of it: it is also the time of the elderly. Today is the time in politics for dialogue between the young and the elderly. Please, take this route.

Politics has seemed in these years at times to retreat in the face of the aggressiveness and pervasiveness of other forms of power, such as those of finance and the media. It is necessary to raise up again the rights of good politics, its independence, and its specific ability to serve the common good, acting so as to diminish inequality, promoting with concrete measures the good of families, providing a solid framework of rights and duties, balancing them both, and making them effective for everyone. The people, who recognise themselves in their own *ethos* and culture, expect of good politics the defence and harmonious development of this heritage and of their best potential. Let us pray that the Lord inspire good politicians, who truly care about society, the people and the good of the poor. To Him, God of justice and peace, I entrust the social and civil life of your city. Thank you.
