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Audience with the Delegation of the United Bible Societies Relations Committee

At 10.30 this morning, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the delegation of the United Bible Societies Relations Committee.

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

Address of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters,

"Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love undying" (*Eph 6:24*). With these words of Saint Paul I am happy to welcome the members of the Church Relations Committee of the *United Bible Societies*, and I thank Cardinal Onaiyekan for his presentation. It is my hope that the grace of the Holy Spirit will be with you, and with all who strive to make the Gospel known by making the Bible more easily accessible in diverse languages and today's wide variety of communication media.

We are servants of the *word of salvation*, which never returns to the Lord empty. Allowing ourselves to be "wounded" by the word is indispensable for expressing verbally that which overflows from the heart. For the word of God "is piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (*Heb 4:12*).

We are servants of the *word of eternal life*, and we believe that man not only lives on bread, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God. (cf. *Mt 4:4*). Aided by the Holy Spirit, we must nourish ourselves at the table of the word by reading, listening, studying and bearing witness with our lives. We devote time to those we love, and here we are dealing with the love of God Who desires to talk to us and offer us words of life eternal.

We are servants of the *word of reconciliation*, also among Christians, and we wish with all our heart that "the

word of the Lord may speed on and triumph" (2 Thess 3:1). It is right therefore to expect a new impetus to our spiritual life from a greater respect for God's word.

We are servants of the *word that "went out" from God and "was made flesh"* (Jn 1:14). It is vital that the Church today go out to proclaim the Gospel to all, in all places, on all occasions, without delay, reluctance or fear (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 23). We do so in obedience to the Lord's missionary mandate, certain of His presence among us until the end of the world (cf. *Mt 28:20*).

We are servants of the *word of truth* (cf. *Jn 8:32*). We are convinced that "the unity willed by God can be attained only by the adherence of all to the content of revealed faith in its entirety.

In matters of faith, compromise is in contradiction with God who is Truth. In the Body of Christ, 'the way, the truth, and the life' (*Jn 14:6*), who could consider legitimate a reconciliation brought about at the expense of the truth?" (*Ut Unum Sint*, 18).

We are servants of the *powerful word of God* that enlightens, protects, defends, heals and frees. "The word of God is not fettered!" (2 *Tim 2: 9*). Many of our brothers and sisters are in prison on account of the word, and many more have shed their blood as a testimony to their faith in Jesus Christ.

Let us walk together to spread the word (cf. *Acts 6:7*). Let us pray together, that "the Father's will be done" (cf. *Mt 6:10*). Let us work together, that what the Lord has said may be accomplished in us (cf. *Lk 1:38*).

Thank you for your visit, dear friends. Let us remain in fraternal communion and pray for each other.
