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Audience of the Holy Father with the participants in the meeting of “European Jesuits in formation”

At 9.00 this morning, in the study of the Paul VI Hall, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the participants in the annual meeting of the “European Jesuits in formation”, taking place in Rome from 28 July to 20 August 2018:

Address of the Holy Father

Good morning. I am pleased to welcome you. Many thanks for this visit, it is good for me. When I was a student, when we had to go to the General, and when with the General we had to go to the Pope, we had to wear the cassock and cape. I see that this fashion no longer exists, thank God.

The priest made me laugh when he spoke about unifying the pastoral ministry of the Jesuits. I had understood that it meant unifying the souls and hearts of Jesuits, not the methods, because if you were to do this the Society of Jesus would come to an end. It used to be said that the first role of the General was to “put the Jesuits to pasture”, and another said, “Yes, but it is like putting a flock of toads out to pasture”: one over here, one over there. But this is good, because great freedom is needed, without freedom one cannot be a Jesuit. And a great obedience to the Pastor, who must have the great gift of discernment to permit each one of the “toads” to choose what he feels the Lord is asking of him. This is the originality of the Society: unity with great diversity.

Blessed Paul VI told us, in the 32nd General Congregation, that where there are encounters of ideas, problems and challenges, there we find a Jesuit. Read that address: in my opinion it is the most beautiful one a Pope has given to the Society. It was a difficult moment for the Society, and Blessed Paul VI began the address thus: “Why do you doubt? A moment of doubt? No! Take courage!” And I would like to link it to another address, not by a Pope but rather by a General, Pedro Arrupe: it was his “swansong”, in the refugee camp in Thailand, I don’t know if it was in Bangkok or south of Bangkok. He gave this address near the aircraft and landed at Fiumicino having had a stroke. It was his last preaching, his testament. In these two addresses there is the framework of what today the Society must do: take courage, go out to the peripheries, to the encounters of ideas, problems, mission... There we find the testament of Arrupe, the “swansong”, the prayer. It takes courage to be a Jesuit. It

does not mean that a Jesuit must be unthinking or reckless, no. But he must have courage. Courage is a grace of God, that Pauline *parrhesia*... And it takes strong knees to pray. I believe that with these two addresses you will have the inspiration to go where the Holy Spirit will tell you, in the heart.

Then we speak about communication, which is one of your themes. I greatly like the communicative method of Saint Peter Faber: yes, Faber communicated and let others communicate. Read the memorial: it is a monument to communication, both inwardly with the Lord, and external communication with people.

And I thank you for what you do. Go ahead, to the crossroads, without fear. But be anchored in the Lord.

Pray for me, do not forget! This job [of the Pope] is not easy... Perhaps this will seem to be a heresy, but usually it is fun. Thank you.

We still have a few minutes: if any of you wish to ask a question or offer a reflection, let us make the most of these minutes. In this way I will learn about your heresies...

Question:

Thank you for your words, Holy Father. The theme of our meetings is communication, and the young. Someone once said to me that being religious or priests means that one thing we never have to face is unemployment. But many young people, even with a high level of preparation, find themselves risking unemployment. I find this to be a challenge to me, to see things from their point of view, because I know that the Society of Jesus and the Church will always have a task for me, somewhere. I find this to be a great challenge for communication: this is an experience of unemployment that I know I will never have. It is something I find difficult...

Pope Francis:

Perhaps this is one of the most acute and painful problems for the young, because it goes right to the heart of the person. The person who does not have a job, feels without dignity. I remember once, in my homeland, a woman came to tell me that her daughter, a university student, spoke several languages but could not find work. That woman wrote me a note which said, "Thank you Father, because you helped my daughter find her dignity again". Not having work takes away our dignity. And more: it is not the fact of not being able to eat, because she can go to Caritas and they will give her something to eat. The problem is not being able to bring bread home: it takes away dignity. When I see – you see – many young people without a job, we must ask ourselves why. You will certainly find the reason: there is a re-organization of the world economy, in which the economy, which is concrete, gives way to finance, which is abstract. At the centre there is finance, and finance is cruel: it is not concrete, it is abstract. And there we play with a collective imagination that is not concrete, but rather liquid and gaseous. At the centre there is this: the world of finance. In its place there ought to be the man and the woman. Today this is, I think, the great sin against the dignity of the person: to displace him from his central place. Speaking last year with a director of the World Monetary Fund, she said to me that she had wanted a dialogue between economy, humanism and spirituality. And she said to me, "I managed to do it. Then I was keen, and wanted to do it between finance, humanism and spirituality. And I did not succeed in doing it, because the economy, even that of the market, can open up to the social market economy, as John Paul II had asked; instead, finance is not capable, because you cannot grasp finance: it is gaseous. Finance resembles the chain of Saint Anthony on a world scale! In this way, with the displacement of the person from the centre and by placing in the centre something like finance, something so "gaseous", gaps in work are generated.

I wanted to say this in general because there we find the roots of the problem of the lack of work, posed in your question. "How can I understand, communicate and accompany a young person who is in that situation of not having a job?" Brother, it takes creativity! In every case. A courageous creativity, to find the way of approaching that situation. But it is not a superficial question, the one you posed. The number of youth suicides is increasing,

but governments – not all of them – do not publish the exact figures: they publish up to a certain point, because it is scandalous. And why do they hang themselves, why do they commit suicide, these young people? The main reason in almost all cases is the lack of work. They are unable to feel useful, and they end up... Other young people do not wish to take their own lives, but they look for an intermediate alienation with dependencies, and addiction, today, is a way of escaping from this lack of dignity. Think that behind every dose of cocaine – let us think – there is a great global industry that makes possible this, and probably, I am not sure, the greatest movement of money in the world. Other young people on their cell phones see interesting things as a life plan: at least they offer work... This is real, this happens! “Ah, I will take an aeroplane and go to enrol in Isis: at least I will have a thousand dollars in my pocket every month and something to do!” Suicide, addiction and guerrilla warfare are three options the young have today, when they have no work. This is important: to understand the problem of young people; to make that young person feel that I understand, and this is communicating with him. And then moving to resolve this problem. The problem has a solution, but it is necessary to find the way, there is a need for a prophetic word, there is a need for human inventiveness, there is a need to do many things. Getting our hands dirty... My answer to your question is a bit long, but they are all elements in taking a decision in communication with a young person who does not have a job. You did well to speak about this, because it is a problem of dignity.

And what happens when a Jesuit does not have a job? That is a big problem! Speak with the spiritual father, with the superior, carry out a good discernment as to why...

Thank you. I will not give you any more work to do [addressing the translator].

Tomorrow is the feast day of Saint Peter Faber: pray to him to give us the grace of learning how to communicate.

Let us pray to Our Lady: Hail Mary...

[Blessing]

And do not forget, please, those two addresses: that of Blessed Paul VI, in 1974, to the 32nd general Congregation, and that of Father Arrupe in Thailand, his swansong, his testament.
