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Audience with the members of the “Tensho Kenoh Shisetsu Kenshoukai” Association, Japan

Words of the Holy Father

Final remarks

At 9.00 this morning, in the study adjacent to the Paul VI Hall, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the members of the “Tensho Kenoh Shisetsu Kenshoukai” Association from Japan.

The following are the Pope’s words of greeting and final extemporaneous remarks:

Words of the Holy Father

Dear friends from Japan, good morning!

I am very happy to meet you and with you Fathers Renzo De Luca and Shinzo Kawamura.

The Pope is very pleased to welcome you, delegates of the *Tensho Kenoho Shisetsu Kenshoukai* Association, to Rome. More than 400 years ago, in 1585, four young Japanese arrived in Rome, accompanied by some Jesuit missionaries, to visit the Pope, who was then Gregory XIII. It was an extraordinary journey, as it was the first time that a group of representatives of your great country came to Europe. The four young people received a wonderful welcome, not only from the Pope, but also from all the cities and courts that they passed through: Lisbon, Madrid, Florence, Rome, Venice, Milan, Genoa ... Europeans met Japanese and Japanese experienced Europe and the heart of the Catholic Church. It was an historic meeting between two great cultures and spiritual traditions, and it is right to preserve the memory, as your Association does.

The journey of your young predecessors lasted more than eight years; there were no planes in those days. Yours is shorter and less tiring. But I hope you feel welcomed by the Pope as they were and that, like them, you will experience the joy of this meeting and be encouraged to return to your country as ambassadors of friendship and promoters of great human and Christian values. The four young people of the Tensho era did exactly this, showing commitment and courage. In particular, I want to remember their leader Mancio Ito, who became a priest, and Julian Nakaura who, like many others, was executed on the famous hill of the martyrs of Nagasaki and was proclaimed blessed.

I know that your Association promotes fine projects of culture and solidarity. I especially encourage your current efforts to set up a fund for the training of young people and orphans, thanks to the contribution of companies that are sensitive to their problems. You wish to show that religion, culture and the economy can work together peacefully to create a more humane world marked by an integral ecology. This is fully in accordance with what I also wish for our human family today and tomorrow, as I wrote in my Encyclical Letter *Laudato si'*. It is the right path for the future of our common home.

Thank you once again for your visit. Like your four young predecessors, convey to your beloved people and your great country the friendship of the Pope of Rome and the esteem of the whole Catholic Church.

Availing myself of this occasion, I would like to communicate my intention to visit Japan next year. I hope to be able to fulfil this wish.

Final remarks

I am very happy with what you have told me, and with this story that I knew from afar. Friendships are made throughout history. That is why memory is important. Do not forget the things that gave us culture, country, language, religion, social belonging. Do not forget that, and take a step forward. The Provincial knows it because he was the director of a museum, so he knows well. You have to cultivate memory.
