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Audience with the participants in the General Chapter of the Order of Friars Minor Capuchin

At 12.50 today, in the Clementine Hall of the Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the participants in the 85th General Chapter of the Order of Friars Minor Capuchin, currently underway in Rome at the "San Lorenzo da Brindisi" International College, from 27 August to 16 September 2018. The Pope gave an unscripted address to those present.

The following is the address the Holy Father had prepared in advance, and which was handed to the participants.

Prepared Address of the Holy Father

Dear Friars Minor Capuchin,

I am glad of this meeting, which allows me to greet you personally on the occasion of your General Chapter. I thank the new Minister General, Fra' Roberto Genuin, and send good wishes to him and his Council. In these days of study and fraternal exchange, you have focused on the theme "Learn from me ... and you will find" (cf. *Mt* 11: 29), to identify apostolic and formative perspectives to offer to your confreres scattered throughout the world. In fact, besides the election of the new government of your Fraternity, you have devoted ample space to the *Ratio Formationis Ordinis*, an important document for leading the consecrated person into the heart of the Gospel, which is the form of life of Jesus, totally spent for God and for your brothers, especially the marginalized and the last among us.

In the footsteps of the Divine Master and following the example of Saint Francis, who learned humbleness and service by encountering lepers, strive to live relationships and religious activity in gratuitousness, humility and meekness. In this way you can realize with real and daily gestures the "minority" that characterizes the followers of Francis. It is a precious gift of great necessity to the Church and for the humanity of our time. This is how the Lord acts: He does things simply. Humility and simplicity are the style of God; and it is this style that all of us as Christians are called to assume in our life and in our mission. The true greatness is to become small and

servants.

With this minority in your heart and lifestyle, you make your contribution to the Church's great commitment to evangelization. You do so by generously carrying out the apostolate in direct contact with different peoples and cultures, especially with so many poor and suffering people. I encourage you in this effort, which you have shared at the international level in the Chapter, urging you not to lose heart in the face of difficulties, including the decline in number of friars in certain areas, but rather to renew every day your trust and hope in support of the grace of God. May the joy of the Gospel, which irresistibly fascinated the Poverello of Assisi, be the source of your strength and constancy, because with reference to the Word of Jesus everything appears in a new light, that of God's providential love. Every time we draw from the source to recover the original freshness of the Gospel, there emerge new paths, new pastoral approaches and creative methods relevant to current circumstances.

Our time shows signs of obvious spiritual and moral discomfort, due to the loss of the sure and comforting references of faith. How great a need people have today to be welcomed, listened to, illuminated with love! And what a great tradition you Capuchins have of everyday closeness to the people, in sharing in their concrete problems, in spiritual conversation and in the administration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation! Do not fail to be teachers of prayer, to cultivate a robust spirituality, which communicates to everyone the call of the "things from above".

In this, you will be more convincing if your communities and structures too express sobriety and parsimony, a visible sign of that primacy of God and of His Spirit, to which consecrated persons commit themselves to bearing clear witness. From this perspective, even the transparent and professional management of economic resources is the image of a true family that walks in co-responsibility and in solidarity between its members and with the poor. Another important aspect of the life of your communities is unity and communion, realized by dedicating ample space to listening and dialogue so as to strengthen fraternal discernment.

The history of your Order is full of many courageous witnesses of Christ and the Gospel, many of whom are proclaimed Saints and Blessed. Their holiness confirms the fruitfulness of your charism and shows the signs of your identity: total consecration to God unto martyrdom, where required, simple life among people, sensitivity towards the poor, spiritual accompaniment as closeness and humility that allows us to welcome everyone. Following your typical way of life, may you walk inspired by renewed zeal, so that you may be driven with prophetic freedom and wise discernment towards courageous apostolic paths and missionary frontiers, always cultivating collaboration with the Bishops and the other components of the ecclesial community.

Your charismatic identity, enriched by the cultural variety of your religious family, is more valid than ever and is an attractive proposal for many young people of the world, who are looking for authenticity and essentiality. May fraternity shine as a qualifying element of your consecrated life, distancing you from any elitist attitude, encouraging you always to seek an encounter between yourselves and all others, especially with the many who thirst for the merciful love that only Christ can offer us.

May the Lord fill you with His graces, and in the spirit of Saint Francis proceed joyfully and sure, always in the grateful awareness of belonging to the holy faithful People of God and serving Him with humility. May the Apostolic Blessing accompany you, which I cordially impart to you, Chapter Fathers, and to your whole Order. And please, do not forget to pray me. Thank you!
