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Audience with members of the Italian Catholic Press Union

At midday today, in the Clementine Hall of the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the members of the Italian Catholic Press Union (UCSI) for the sixtieth anniversary of the birth of the Association.

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

Address of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters,

I welcome you all on the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of the Italian Catholic Press Union (UCSI), and I thank the president for her kind words. She is brave! She speaks strongly!

You have come together to remember a "community vocation" – the fruit of the founders' dream – which is to be, as is written in your Statute, "a professional and ecclesial association inspired by the service of persons, the Gospel and the Magisterium of the Church".

I encourage you to carry out this mission by always drawing nourishment from the roots that are at your origin: faith, passion for the history of men and the care for the anthropological and ethical dimensions of communication. The magazine "*Desk*" and the website, the formation school of Assisi and the many activities throughout the territory are tangible signs of your service to the common good.

In order to renew your harmony with the Magisterium of the Church, I urge you to be the voice of the conscience of a journalism capable of distinguishing good from evil, human choices from inhuman ones. Because today there is a mixture that is not distinguished, and you must help in this. The journalist – who is the chronicler of history – is called to reconstruct the memory of the facts, to work for social cohesion, to tell the truth at any cost:

there is also a *parrhesia* – that is, courage – of the journalist, always respectful, never arrogant.

This also means being free in front of the audience: speaking in the evangelical style: “yes, yes”, “no, no”, because anything more than this comes from the evil one (cf. *Mt* 5: 37). Communication needs real words in the midst of so many empty words. And in this you have a great responsibility: your words tell the story of the world and shape it, your stories can generate spaces of freedom or slavery, of responsibility or dependence on power. How often a journalist wishes to go along this road, but behind him or her there is an editor who says, “No, we don’t publish this, this yes, this no”, and all this truth is distilled in terms of the financial convenience of the editor, and ends up communicating what is not true, what is not beautiful and what is not good. From many of your predecessors you have learned that it is only through the use of words of peace, justice and solidarity, made credible by consistent witness, that more just and supportive societies can be built. Unfortunately, however, the opposite also applies. May you contribute to exposing false and destructive words.

In the age of the web, the task of the journalist is to identify credible sources, and to contextualize, interpret and prioritize them. I often give this example: a person freezes to death in the street, and does not make the news; whereas if the Stock Exchange falls by two points, all the agencies talk about it (cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, 53). Something doesn’t work.

Do not be afraid to overturn the order of the news, to give voice to those who do not have it; to tell the “good news” that generates social friendship; to build communities of thought and life capable of reading the signs of the times. I thank you because you already strive to work for this, even with documents such as *Laudato si’*, which is not an ecological encyclical, but a social one, and promotes a new model of integral human development: you cooperate in making it become a shared culture – thank you! – as an alternative to systems in which one is forced to reduce everything to consumption.

Associations like yours, in order to continue to bear fruit, must know how to recognize with humility and to prune the “dry branches”, which have dried up precisely because over time they have lost contact with the roots. Today you operate in a historical and cultural context radically different from the one in which you were born. And in the meantime, more streamlined and mission-centric forms of associative management have also developed: I encourage you to follow them without fear and to reform yourselves from within in order to offer a better witness.

Your journey is historically linked to that of the Church in Italy, and you are accompanied by some fathers and writers of *Civiltà Cattolica* who are members of the Association. May you continue to count on these important references.

On June 12, 2010, the Church proclaimed Blessed the first lay journalist, Manuel Lozano Garrido, better known as Lolo; he lived in the days of the Spanish Civil War, when being a Christian meant risking one’s life. Despite the illness that forced him to live twenty-eight years in a wheelchair, he never ceased to love his profession. In his “journalist's Decalogue” he recommends “paying with the currency of frankness”, “working the bread of clean information with the salt of style and the yeast of eternity” and serving “neither pastries nor spicy dishes, but rather the good morsel of a clean and hopeful life”. Truly a good example to follow!

Dear friends, I assure you and your families of my remembrance in prayer. I cordially bless your work, so that it may be fruitful. And please, do not forget to pray for me. Thank you!