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Audience with the participants in the 11th General Chapter of the Pious Institute of the Daughters of Saint Paul

At 11.30 this morning, in the Clementine Hall of the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the participants in the eleventh General Chapter of the Pious Institute of the Daughters of Saint Paul, taking place in Ariccia from 5 September to 5 October 2019, on the theme *"Arise, go on your journey" (Dt 10: 11), trusting in the Promise*.

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

Address of the Holy Father

Dear sisters,

I welcome you who, from the five continents, are participating in the eleventh General Chapter of the Daughters of Saint Paul. And I thank the Superior General for her kind words.

The theme you have chosen for your reflection is *"Arise, go on your journey" (Dt 10: 11), trusting in the Promise*. A strongly biblical theme, which recalls the experience of Moses, the experience of Abraham, of Elijah, of many, and more generally, the experience of the People of God. The history of salvation, both of the individual person and the population, is rooted in the willingness to depart, to leave, to set out on a journey, not by one's own initiative, but as the response to the call and trusting in the promise. It is the experience of Grace- Saint Paul would say – that was given to us in Jesus Christ. "You did not choose me, but I chose you" (Jn 15: 16). And this applies not only for the calling, but also for our present and for our future: "Apart from me you can do nothing", says the Lord (Jn 15: 5).

Dear sisters, in these "delicate and hard" times, as Pope Saint John Paul II said (Apostolic Exhortation *Vita consecrata*, 13), faith is more necessary than ever. Many say that consecrated life is going through a winter. It may be so, since vocations are scarce, the average age is advancing and fidelity to the commitments made by

profession is not always what it should be. In this situation, the great challenge is to get through the winter so as to flourish and bear fruit. The coldness of society, sometimes even within the Church and the consecrated life itself, pushes us to go to the roots, to live the roots. Winter, even in the Church and in consecrated life, is not a time of sterility and death, but a favourable time that allows us to return to the essential. For you: to rediscover the elements of Pauline prophecy, to rediscover the apostolic and missionary itinerancy which cannot be lacking in a Daughter of Saint Paul, so that we can live on the peripheries of thought and on the peripheries of existence.

Born for the Word, to proclaim to all the luminous way of life that is the Gospel of Jesus Christ, you carry missionary boldness in your DNA. Never let this boldness be diminished, in the knowledge that the protagonist of the mission is the Holy Spirit. This is clear! I hope that the Chapter that you are experiencing will be a good time to ask yourselves: how can we express the Pauline prophecy in response to the calls that come to us in our time?

It is a matter of setting out on the streets of the world, with a contemplative gaze full of empathy for the men and women of our time, hungry for the Good News of the Gospel. To feel part of an outgoing Institute, in mission, putting all your strength at the service of evangelization. Let yourselves be challenged by the reality in which we live, let yourselves be disturbed by reality. Constantly seek ways of proximity, keeping in your hearts the ability to feel compassion for the many needs that surround us. I would like to underline this word, “compassion”. It is a very evangelical word, that the Gospel very often says of Jesus: “He had compassion”. When He sees the crowd, when He sees the daughter of the widow of Nain, when He sees so many situations... “He had compassion, pity”. It is God’s compassion. To be missionary with a witness of life centred in Christ, especially for you, through editorial, digital and multimedia production, and by promoting critical formation via of the media and biblical animation.

All this is impossible without faith: the faith of Abraham who “believed against hope” (*Rm* 4: 18); the faith of Mary, who even without understanding the mystery that surrounds her, believes and consents: “Let it be to me according to your word” (*Lk* 1: 38); the faith of Peter, who says: “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life” (*Jn* 6: 68).

In times of fatigue and frustration, God commands Elijah: “Rise and eat” (*1 Kings* 19: 5). [Addressing the Superior] Mother general, may they eat well! Do not let yourself be obstructed by tiredness or resignation. Resignation is a woodworm that enters in the soul, embitters the heart. When we think of consecrated men and women with that long face... “Ah, that is how things are, unfortunately!” The use of *unfortunately*, with that attitude... Do not give in to the spirit of resignation. The road you have travelled is long and fruitful. And the road that remains to be travelled is long (cf. *1 Kings* 19: 7). Nourish with the bread of the Word, go ahead, in the midst of the lights and shadows of the cultural context in which we live – take risks, take risks – be faithful to the perspective that is proper to you, that is, not primarily a moral judgment, but the search for opportunities to sow the Word, with the “imagination” of communication. Interpreting the thirst and hunger of our contemporaries: thirst for God, hunger for the Gospel. And all this with a discernment and empathy that originate in trust in God, the God of history. In this context I encourage you to revive the gift of faith by always letting yourselves be enlightened by the Word. It is the centre of your personal and community life, in the liturgy and in *lectio divina*. The Word that keeps the apostolic spirit alive in your Institute. The gifts you have brought me express this charism of yours. Thank you so much!

“Arise, go on your journey”. This verb “to arise” corresponds to the Greek term *anastasis*, resurrection: “Get up, arise!” It is an Paschal verb. It is also a spousal verb, as it appears in the Song of Songs (cf. 2,10.13). Get up and “set out”, like Mary Magdalene at the dawn of the resurrection (cf. *Jn* 20: 1-2); like Peter and the other disciple who run to the tomb (cf. *Jn* 20: 3-4); and first of all like Mary on her visit to Elizabeth (cf. *Lk* 1: 39ff). Set out, with the boldness that comes from the Spirit and the creativity that has characterized your Founder. Go out, depart *in haste*, like the Virgin Mary and Saint Paul: in this way you too are called to communicate, through your apostolic life and works, the Good News to the men and women of today. There is no time to waste. “Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel” (*1 Cor* 9: 16).

Dear sisters, may the intercession of the Apostle of the Gentiles always assist you. May you also be accompanied by my blessing, which I cordially impart to you and to all your communities throughout the world. Fifty-five countries, you said? [The Superior answers: "Fifty-two countries"]. All over the world! And a greeting to all the sisters. And please do not forget to pray for me. Thank you.
