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Audience with the participants in the General Chapter of the Religious of Mary Immaculate Claretian Missionary Sisters

This morning, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the participants in the 18th General Chapter of the Religious of Mary Immaculate Claretian Missionary Sisters, to whom he delivered the following address:

Address of the Holy Father

Dear Mother General,

Dear Chapter Sisters,

I am glad to receive you here today, as you are celebrating the Ordinary General Chapter, the eighteenth, of your Congregation.

I know you have undergone a long journey to prepare for this event, and that you did not do it alone, but accompanied by other members of the Claretian Family and other people with whom you share your life and mission. Thank you for this journey.

Your itinerary reminds me of the passage of Emmaus. In that Gospel account, we see two disciples who *walk together*, at a certain moment encounter a stranger, talk with him, and invite him to dine. When they discover that pilgrim is the Risen Jesus – and they realize when they feel their hearts are aflame in his presence, when they are witnesses of his words and his deeds, when they share bread and wine and enter *in communion* with him – then they cannot but *go out and proclaim him*. They leave in haste, full of joy. We can recognize, in the account of Emmaus, the main elements of the synodal process we are living in the Church: *encounter, participation, dialogue, communion, mission*. All this: encounter, participation, dialogue, communion, mission.

And it is what you wish to live and offer, starting from the peculiarity of your charism, joining in the journey of the

universal Church. I thank you for this willingness, this longing to build together spaces for listening, and spaces for proclaiming the Gospel, in every place in the world where you are present.

I would like to emphasize, starting from the name of the Congregation, three notes that are characteristic of your vocation: you are Marian, missionary, and Claretian. You are *Marian*, the Immaculate Heart of Mary accompanies you, she indicates the Sacred Heart of her Son and says to you: "Do whatever he tells you" (*Jn* 2:5). It is curious: in the attitude of Mary's soul, there is always this: indicating Jesus, pointing to Jesus. Never herself, never. Him, pointing to Jesus. This is the mission of the Mother: to point to Jesus. As *missionaries*, you bring the message of Jesus where you are sent, with the trust and tenderness of Mary, embodying the words and deeds of the Lord to make his Kingdom of love present in the world. And you are also *Claretian*, daughters of Antonio Maria Claret; a pastor saint, missionary and founder who intercedes for you and is the model to which you can always look to learn how to cultivate the filial relationship with Mary, the passion for evangelization and missionary boldness. Something of which I have experience, with the Claretians, above all having this mysticism.

Dear sisters, I invite you to advance your charismatic roots constantly, in these three congregational notes that identify you: it is the legacy you have received and which you are required to transmit to those who surround you, "infecting" them with the joy of the Gospel. Do not be afraid to cross geographical borders, and even existential frontiers, as Fr. Claret did, so that all may know the boundless love of the Heart of God. The Church and the world today urgently need the faithful and courageous witness of your consecrated lives.

I pray for the fruits of the Chapter to be creative. I ask you not to forget to pray for me. May Jesus bless you and may Mary Immaculate keep you. Thank you.
