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Audience with the members of the Family Promotion Association “Incontro Matrimoniale”

This morning, in the Paul VI Hall, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the members of the Family Promotion Association “*Incontro Matrimoniale*”, to whom he delivered the following address:

Address of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters,

I welcome you and thank you for your visit, which takes place while you are experiencing a few days of reflection on the occasion of your forty-fifth anniversary: best wishes!

Throughout these years, inspired by Jesus’ commandment of love (cf. *Jn 15:12*), you have been committed to the rediscovery of the Sacraments of Marriage and of Holy Orders, striving not only to deepen their richness in a distinct way, but also to bring out the relationship between these two important vocations. Indeed, Marriage and Orders, Holy Orders, while in different ways and according to the charism proper to each one, are intimately linked inasmuch as both manifest God’s love, building up the mystical Body of the Church. In fact, these two sacraments, by different but complementary paths, speak of *spousality*: on the one hand the total, unique and indissoluble giving of the spouses, on the other the offering of the priest’s life for the Church, are signs of God’s spousal love for us.

In keeping with the theme you have chosen for this occasion, “*We are God’s dream*”, I would like to tell you that your “spousal charism” is a prophecy for the realization of God’s dream. And what is God’s dream? Inviting the disciples to remain attached to Him like the branches to the vine (cf. *Jn 15:4*) and, praying to the Father to preserve them in love, Jesus Himself reveals it to us, imploring us all to be “one” (*Jn 17:21*). God’s dream for us is this: to unite us in His love, in His communion, to make us discover the beauty of divine sonship and brotherhood among us. For this Jesus prayed earnestly. And He sends us on the roads of the world to announce that the way to generate a new humanity is based on fraternity, the fruit of charity, not on prevarication and selfishness.

In this regard, the service you offer to the Church, but also to society, namely the accompaniment of spouses and priests, is a precious component that contributes to realizing God's dream. You do not do so with so many words or with abstract theories, but above all by entering with love into the reality of the concrete life of people. In this way your charism recalls that faith is first and foremost an experience of relation and encounter.

It is a story of love with God, with our brothers, with our sisters. You look closely at the dialogue, not always easy, between spouses, and the at times complex situations that priests are required to face, favouring a fruitful exchange, so as to learn together the art of relationship, the art of communion. In this way you carry forward God's dream, a dream of spousal communion, in a time that sometimes prefers to tread the swampy paths of individualism instead of venturing towards the splendid heights of love.

You are also a sign for the life of the Church, which is called to tread the path of ever greater reciprocity between gifts, charisms and ministries. The exchange between spouses and pastors favours the evangelizing action that we urgently need today. Indeed, it is through relationships, above all by witnessing the beauty of relationships, that we are able to proclaim the richness of the Gospel and show the love that God has for every creature.

I therefore encourage you to continue your commitment with generosity and passion: to put the experiences of spouses, priests and religious into circulation; to open the doors of your path to young people and engaged couples; not to be afraid to forge new paths that will help Christian communities to better and better realize the convergence between spouses and their pastors. And, above all, to let yourselves be guided by the Holy Spirit – let yourselves be guided by the Holy Spirit – who is the love of God and without whom our activities are barren and vain. It is the Spirit who opens hearts and minds – it is the Spirit who does this – who makes us, all of us, protagonists of God's dream!

Thank you for your valuable service. Go forth, and go forth with joy, not with sadness, with joy! I bless you and please do not forget to pray for me. Thank you.
