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## Audience with employees of the Vatican Pharmacy

This morning in the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the employees of the Vatican Pharmacy on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of its founding, to whom he delivered the following address:

### Address of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

I greet Cardinal Végez, president of the Governorate, Sr. Raffaella Petrini, secretary general, the Father General Br. Jesús Etayo Arrondo, the Council, the director Br. Thomas Binish, with the consecrated religious of the Hospitaller Order of Saint John of God, and all of you, dear collaborators and employees of the Vatican Pharmacy.

It is good to meet you as the 150th anniversary of your founding approaches. Going to the roots of your history, I like to recall that the institution realized a dream of Pope Gregory XVI, a Camaldolese monk who was well aware of the importance of the pharmacy annexed to the monastery. It was then Blessed Pius IX who realized dream, entrusting to the Superior General of the Hospitaller Order of Saint John of God the task of establishing a pharmacy in the Vatican. Indeed, the Order had a long tradition in this area, with the pharmacy of the religious house also serving outsiders in many places. Thus, Brother Eusebio Frommer, a Fatebenefratelli religious, was chosen as the first pharmacist, and your unique story began. One hundred and fifty years ago!

Still reminiscing, almost flipping through an album of photographs together, it is good to recall an important moment, namely the service of your Order during Vatican II. Every morning, before the start of the Council sessions, the Pharmacy premises were crowded with bishops of all nationalities for the purchase of medicines, and while a small group of consecrated religious tried to satisfy requests in the various languages, two other religious nurses were present at the fixed first-aid stations, together with a doctor and two stretcher bearers, for any other needs.

And we come to our days, now, with your Pharmacy, which differs from the others not only because it is dedicated to the direct service of the Successor of Peter and the Roman Curia, but also because it is called to a “supplement of charity”, carrying out a service that, in addition to the sale of medicines, is required to distinguish itself for its attention to the most fragile people and for the care of those who are ill. It is a commitment not only to Vatican employees and residents in Vatican City, but also to those who need special medicines, which are often hard to obtain elsewhere.

I would like to say thank you for this: thank you to Fatebenefratelli, to the lay collaborators, the pharmacists and the employees, to those who work in the warehouses and all those who collaborate in this work. Thank you for your professionalism and dedication, but also for the spirit of hospitality and readiness with which you carry out your task, which often requires effort and – as happened especially during the pandemic – a willingness to sacrifice.

It is not easy for you, and it is not easy for pharmacists in general, of whom I am thinking at this time and to whom I would like to dedicate a thought. So many people come to them, especially the elderly, who often, in today's hectic pace, need not only a medicine, but also attention, a smile; they need an ear, a word of comfort. Do not forget this: the apostolate of the ears. Listen, listen... It sounds boring, sometimes, but for the person speaking it is a caress from God through you. And pharmacists are this close, outstretched hand, not just handing out medicines, but transmitting courage and closeness. Thank you and all pharmacists for this! Yours is not a profession, it is a mission. Thank you.

Dear sisters and brothers, keep going: you, the community of Fatebenefratelli, pharmacists, collaborators and employees, with generosity, because every day you can do so much good, both by making the service of the Vatican Pharmacy ever more efficient and modern, and by manifesting that attentive care and that caring welcome which are a witness to the Gospel for those who come into contact with you.

Be very patient, remembering that patience is the litmus test of love. And, finally, a small piece of spiritual advice: every day, raise your eyes to the Crucifix, turning your gaze to God, pierced and wounded. The service you provide to the sick is a service rendered to him. And it is good to draw patience and benevolence from the heavenly Doctor, and the strength to love, without tiring. In his school, from the desk of the cross to the counter of the pharmacy, may you too be daily dispensers of mercy. I bless you and ask you, please, to pray for me. Thank you.

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