



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO THE ASSOCIATION OF PRIESTS OF PRADO

*Consistory Hall
Saturday, 7 April 2018*

[Multimedia]

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I am pleased to welcome you on the occasion of your pilgrimage to Rome as members of the Prado family, committed to offering your life daily to follow Fr Antoine Chevrier's example of service to the poorest. This meeting gives me the opportunity to thank the Lord with you for the journey undertaken from the time when your Blessed Founder, struck by the poverty of the most destitute people of his times, decided to be close to them so that they could know and love Jesus. Since then, the plant has grown admirably: you are now a beautiful family of priests, sisters and consecrated lay women, spread throughout various countries, harbouring the same love as Jesus, who became poor among the poor, and by the same zeal to evangelize.

Our age, too, knows its poverty, old and new, material and spiritual; and there are many around us who experience all manner of suffering, wounds, misery and distress. They are very often far from the Church and completely overlook the joy and comfort that comes from the Gospel. The mission to be carried out among them is immense, and Mother Church is happy to be able to count on the support of Fr Chevrier's disciples. Indeed, I cannot but approve and encourage the pastoral activity that you carry out, in accordance with the charism of your institutes, a charism which touches me personally and which is at the heart of the missionary renewal to which the entire Church is called, because there is a "profound connection between evangelization and human advancement, which must necessarily find expression and develop in every work of evangelization" (Apostolic Exhortation [*Evangelii Gaudium*, 178](#)).

On the occasion of the beatification of Fr Chevrier in 1986 in Lyons, Saint [Pope John Paul II](#)

offered you various approaches to strengthen your dynamism, which you well know; and on my part, I cannot but renew them. To mention just one of them, he asked that you “speak about Jesus Christ with the same intensity of faith as Fr Chevrier.... The poor have the right to be told about Jesus Christ. They have the right to the Gospel and to the totality of the Gospel” (*Address to the Prado Institute, 7 October 1986*). In fact, I like to recall that the vast majority of the poor have a particular openness to faith; they need God, and the lack of spiritual attention toward them is the worst type of discrimination. “Our preferential option for the poor must mainly translate into a privileged and preferential religious care” (*Evangelii Gaudium, 200*).

Dear brothers and sisters, I invite you to return continually to the magnificent figure of your Founder, to meditate on his life, to ask for his intercession. The spiritual experience which he lived intensely — an immense compassion for the poor, an understanding and sharing of their suffering and, at the same time, a contemplation of the despoliation of Christ who became one of them — was the source of his apostolic zeal. And it will also be so for your missionary dynamism.

May the Holy Spirit illuminate the paths he calls you to travel; may he comfort you in the face of challenges and difficulties. Entrusting your Institutes and all their members to the intercession of Blessed Antoine Chevrier, I pray that the Virgin Mary may keep them under her maternal protection, and I impart to you my heartfelt Apostolic Blessing.