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## To the Confederation of Italian Cooperatives: witnesses of how faith inspires concrete efforts through history

Vatican City, 6 May 2016 – Building enterprise taking as a starting point the needs of people is for Pope Francis one of the characteristics of cooperatives, to whom he sent a video message yesterday afternoon on the occasion of the 2016 National Assembly of the Confederation of Italian Cooperatives, on the theme "Protagonists in the service of the country".

In the video, the Holy Father, addressing the participants as "friends", recalls the indications he made during their previous encounter on 28 February 2015: continue to be the motor for lifting up and developing the weakest part of our local communities and of civil society, especially by founding new enterprises to create jobs; becoming active agents of new welfare solutions, as they do already; to manage cooperatives as their name suggests, that is, by promoting the cooperation of all; doing everything possible to support, facilitate and foster family life, as neither people nor families should be abandoned, and harmonising work and family, providing good means to do good works, as creativity and generosity are necessary to capitalise cooperatives and to invest well; and to counter false cooperatives, as they should promote the economy of honesty and participate actively in globalisation to integrate development, justice and peace in the world. He also emphasised that in the intervening period since their last encounter, "the drama, indeed often the tragedy of migration, cross-border terrorism and the worldwide economic slowdown" have however made these indications even more timely.

"Keep your origins clearly in mind, as they give you strength: collaboration with your parishes, dioceses and the capacity to think of enterprise while lending a hand to those in difficulty. Many people know how to create a business starting from opportunities. Creating a business starting from needs is your talent. Maintain this wealth, while you build up prospects with other associations to make evident the common value of all true cooperatives. ... Allow yourselves to be guided by your commitment to the common good, the good of cooperators and the good that cooperatives achieve in your country. If the cooperative functions, it enables solidarity to grow between its members, strengthening common responsibility and the capacity to recognise generously what others know how to do, and also to accept limits. In a word, in the cooperative fraternity grows. It is not simply a capital of trust, but rather much more: it is fraternity, the resource the world is most in need of. You offer witness of how faith inspires concrete commitment in human history and supports generous motivations that can improve things."

Francis concludes by noting that "we are in the Year of Mercy; primarily the omnipotent mercy of the Lord, but mercy is also expressed through women and men. I hope that your efforts in the cooperatives may also become an expression of mercy."

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