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To the Nomadelfia community: never tire of nurturing dialogue between generations

The Nomadelfia Community – consisting around 330 people, including many children – founded by the Italian priest Zeno Saltini (1900-1981), which proposes a model of life inspired by the first Christians and who are based in the province of Grosseto, was received in audience by Pope Francis in the Clementine Hall this morning. After hearing testimonies from some of its members and being invited to visit the Nomadelfia Community, which receives around 10,000 people every year, the Holy Father addressed those present.

“I rejoice at living this encounter with you and at being able to know better your experience of community life. I was impressed by your testimonies and thank you for what you have said.

“The time of Advent helps us to meditate on the mystery of the Son of God made flesh, Who with His birth brought light and peace to the world. At Christmas God reveals Himself not as He Who stays on high and who rules the universe, but as He who stoops and descends, assuming the fragile aspect of child. In this way, God teaches us that we must not place ourselves above others, but rather that we are called to lower ourselves, to serve the weakest with love, to make ourselves small with the small. If God, through the coming of His Son on earth, became involved with man to the point of making Himself like one of us, but without sin, it follows that, according to the very word of Jesus, anything we do to one of the smallest we would do also to Him (cf. Mt. 25, 40).

“Don Zeno Saltini, your founder, had understood these things well and, while through difficulties and misunderstandings, he went on trustfully, with the aim of bringing the good seed of the Gospel even to the most parched earth. And he succeeded! Your Nomadelfia community is the proof. Don Zeno appears to us today as an example of a faithful disciple of Christ who, in imitation of the Divine Master, stoops to the sufferings of the weakest and poorest, becoming a witness of inexhaustible faith. May courage and perseverance be a guide to you in your daily commitment to making fruitful the seeds of good that he has sown abundantly, inspired by evangelical passion and sincere love of the Church. He who nourishes, dresses and welcomes one of the poorest among men, will have nourished, welcomed and loved the Son of God Himself. He, on the contrary, who rejects, drives away, forgets one of the smallest and weakest, will have neglected God Himself. As St. John says, “He who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen”.

“Dear brothers and sisters, your spiritual heritage is linked in a special way to the life of fraternity, characterised

in particular by your welcome to children and your special care for the elderly. I encourage you to give to society this example of care and tenderness, which is so important. Children and the elderly construct the future of peoples: children, because they take history forward, and the elderly, because they transmit the experience and wisdom of their life. Do not tire of cultivating and nurturing this dialogue between generations, making faith your lodestar and the Word of God the principal lesson to be assimilated and lived in the reality of everyday life. You will therefore be increasingly able to imitate God's closeness to men, and to contemplate in the countenance of the most fragile people the image of the Child Jesus.

"I wish you all a good journey towards Christmas, so that you celebrate it with joy and peace in your heart. May the Lord bless you and the Virgin Mary protect you. And I ask you, please, to pray for me".
