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Audience with the community of the journal *La Civiltà Cattolica*

This morning at 10.30, in the Consistory Hall of the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father received in audience the community of the journal *La Civiltà Cattolica*, to commemorate the publication of the 4,000th issue. The following are extensive extracts from the Pope's address:

"It is a truly unique milestone: the journal has accomplished a 167-year journey in time and continues courageously to navigate in open waters.

Stay in open waters! The Catholic must never be afraid of open waters, and must never seek the shelter of safe harbours. You above all, as Jesuits: avoid clinging to certainties and security. The Lord calls us to go out in mission, to venture into the deep and not to retire to cherished certainties.

Your navigation is not solitary. My predecessors, from Blessed Pius IX to Benedict XVI ... recognised on several occasions how your navigation is in the barque of St. Peter. This bond to the Pontiff has always been an essential feature of your journal. You are in the barque of St. Peter. At times in history – today as before – it may be buffeted by the waves, and we should not be surprised by this. But even the very sailors called to row in the barque of Peter can row in the opposite direction. It has always happened. You, at *La Civiltà Cattolica*, must be "expert and brave rowers". ... Let us row together!

Four thousand issues are not simply a collection of papers. There is a life inside them ... and above all, much work. I know that your ancient predecessors liked simply to call themselves 'workers': not 'intellectuals', but 'workers'. I like very much this definition, which is humble, modest and very effective. St. Ignatius wanted us to be workers in the mystic vineyard. I work in a way, you work in another way. But we are together, next to each other.

How many things have happened in the 167 years of life of the journal and gathered in those four thousand books! At every thousandth copy you have met the Pope: Leo XIII, Pius XI, Paul VI celebrated the previous ones. Now you are here with me. And with you there is the Father General of the Society of Jesus, because Blessed Pius IX wanted the College to 'depend completely and in all matters' on him. I confirm this entrustment of *La Civiltà Cattolica* to the Father General precisely on account of the specific task that your journal performs in

direct service to the Apostolic See.

And more generally, I confirm the original Statutes of your journal, which Pius IX wrote in 1866, instituting *La Civiltà Cattolica* "in perpetuity". The deep and specific meaning of your journal is well described and must remain unchanged, that is, that of a journal that is the expression of a community of writers, all Jesuits, who share not only an intellectual experience, but also a charismatic inspiration and, at least in the fundamental nucleus of the editorial office, the daily life of the community. ... The centre of *La Civiltà Cattolica* is the College of Writers. Everything must revolve around it, and its mission.

This mission – for the first time in 167 years – from now on extends beyond the linguistic confines of Italian. I am pleased to be able to bless the editions of *La Civiltà Cattolica* in Spanish, English, French and Korean. This is an evolution that your predecessors, at the time of the Council, already had in mind, but which was never implemented. ... Now that the world is increasingly connected, overcoming linguistic barriers will help to disseminate better the message to a wider public. ... Living culture tends to open, to integrate, to multiply, to share, to enter into dialogue, to give and to receive within a people and with other peoples with whom it forms relations. *La Civiltà Cattolica* will be a journal increasingly open to the world. This is a new way of living your specific mission.

And what is this specific mission? It is that of being a Catholic journal. But being a Catholic journal does not simply mean defending Catholic ideas, as if Catholicism were a philosophy. ... In my meeting with you three years ago I presented your mission in three words: dialogue, discernment, frontier. I repeat these today. In the inaugural message I sent you, for the number 4000 I used the image of a bridge. I like to think of *La Civiltà Cattolica* as a journal that is both 'bridge' and 'frontier'.

Today I would like to add some reflections to look further at what your founders, followed by Paul VI, called the 'constitutional design' of the journal. And I will give you three 'patrons' ... for you to look to as you go forward.

The first word is *restlessness*. ... If you want to inhabit bridges and frontiers, you must have a restless mind and heart. At times, the security of doctrine is confused with suspicion of research. For you, may it not be thus. Christian values and traditions are not rare specimens to be enclosed in the cabinets of a museum. May the certainty of faith instead be the motor of your research.

I give you as a patron St. Peter Faber (1506-1546), a man of great desires, a restless spirit, never satisfied, a pioneer of ecumenism. For Faber, it is precisely when one proposes difficulties that the true spirit that moves to action is made manifest (cf. *Memorial*, 301). An authentic faith always implies a profound desire to change the world.

May your journal acknowledge the wounds of this world, and the individual therapies. May your writing tend to understand evil, but also to pour oil on open wounds, to heal. Faber journeyed on foot and died young of fatigue, devoured by his desires for the greater glory of God. You walk with your restless intelligence that the keyboards of your computers translates into reflections that serve to build a better world, the Kingdom of God.

The second word is *incompleteness*. God is the *Deus semper maior*, the God who always surprises us. Therefore, you must be writers and journalists of the incomplete thought, that is, open rather than closed and rigid. ... Let yourselves be guided by the prophetic spirit of the Gospel to have an original vision, vital, dynamic and not obvious. And this today, in particular, in a world so complex and full of challenges in which the 'shipwreck culture' – nurtured by profane messianism, relativist mediocrity, suspicion and rigidity – and the 'dustbin culture', where anything that does not work as it should or which is considered obsolete is thrown away.

Only a truly open way of thinking can face the crisis and the knowledge of where the world is going, of how to face the most complex and urgent crises, geopolitics, the challenges of the economy and the grave humanitarian crisis linked to the drama of migration, which is the true global political crux of our times.

I therefore give you, as a figure of reference, the Servant of God Fr. Matteo Ricci (1522-1610). He composed a great Chinese world map depicting all the continents and the islands then known. The world map also served to introduce the Chinese people to other civilisations. So, with your articles you too are called to compose a map of the world: to show recent discoveries, to give a name to places, to make known what Catholic civilisation means, but also to make known to Catholics that God is at work also outside the confines of the Church, in every true civilisation, with the breath of the Holy Spirit.

The third word is *imagination*. This, in the Church and in the world, is the time of discernment. Discernment is always achieved in the presence of the Lord, looking at the signs, listening to things that happen, hearing the people who know the humble way of everyday stubbornness, and especially of the poor. The knowledge of discernment redeems the necessary ambiguity of life. But it is necessary to penetrate ambiguity, to enter into it, as the Lord Jesus did, assuming our flesh. Rigid thought is not divine, because Jesus assumed our flesh, which is not rigid if not at the moment of death.

This is why I like poetry, and when it is possible, I continue to read it. Poetry is full of metaphors. Understanding metaphors helps to render thought agile, intuitive, flexible, acute. He who has imagination does not become rigid; he has a sense of humour, he always enjoys the sweetness of mercy and of inner freedom. He is able to throw open broad visions even in limited spaces, as Brother Andrea Pozzo (1642-1709) did in his painterly works, by creating with the imagination open spaces, domes and corridors, where there are only roofs and walls. I give you him too as a figure of reference.

Therefore, cultivate in your journal a space for art, literature, cinema, theatre and music. You have done this ever since the beginnings, since 1850. Some days ago I was reflecting on the works of the Flemish painter Hans Memling. And I thought of how his painting, a miracle of delicacy, represents the people well. Then I thought of Baudelaire's verses on Reubens, where he writes that 'la vie afflue et s'agite sans cesse, / Comme l'air dans le ciel et la mer dans la mer'. Yes, life throngs and seethes without cease, like the air in the sky and the water in the sea. The thought of the Church must recover its genius and understand ever better how man understands himself today so as to develop and deepen its teaching. And this genius helps understand that life is not a painting in black and white. It is in colour. Some light, others dark, some muted and others bright. But in any case, the intermediate shades prevail. And this is the space of discernment, the space where the Spirit disturbs the sky as air and the sea as water. Your task –as Blessed Paul VI asked – is that of 'living the encounter between the burning needs of man and the perennial message of the Gospel'. ... And these burning needs you already carry within yourselves, and in your spiritual life. Give this encounter the most appropriate forms, new ones too, as demanded by today's way of communicating, which changes with the passing of time".
