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Message of the Holy Father Francis for the 25th Anniversary of the "Populorum Progressio" Foundation

To Cardinal Peter K. A. Turkson
Prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development Service and
President of the *Populorum Progressio* Foundation

On the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the creation of the *Populorum Progressio* Foundation, I would like to convey my greetings to all the members of the Board of Directors of the institution, to its collaborators and to all those who will meet to celebrate this event in Rome.

On 13 November 1992, my predecessor, John Paul II, created the *Populorum Progressio* Foundation to help improve the conditions of the indigenous, mestizo and African-American peoples in Latin America, who are among the most marginalized groups in Latin American and Caribbean society. His wish was for this institution to express the Pope's closeness to people who lack even the most essential goods to live, and whom society or its authorities often leave behind. The initiatives this organism carries out are intended as a manifestation of God's love and of the maternal presence of the Church in the midst of all men, particularly the poorest of the poor (*Lk* 7: 22).

Since then, the Foundation has supported around 4,400 projects, thanks to the generosity of so many Catholics and men of good will who have generously given what they had so others could improve their living conditions.

It is important to mention that the particular Churches of Latin America participate in the realization of the projects and in the Managing Board, formed by six Ordinaries of the region, which studies the initiatives presented by bishops and pastoral leaders.

However, the situation in Latin America requires a stronger commitment, in order to improve the living conditions of all, without excluding anyone, also in the fight against injustice and corruption, so as to obtain the best results of the efforts deployed. Indeed, despite the potential of the Latin American countries – inhabited by people in solidarity with others and with great wealth from a historical and cultural point of view, as well as natural resources – the current economic and social crisis, worsened by the scourge of external debt that paralyzes

development, has affected the population and increased poverty, unemployment and social inequality, also contributing to the exploitation and abuse of our common home, at a level we had never imagined before.

When an economic system places only the god of money at the centre, policies of exclusion are triggered and there is no longer any place for men or for women. The human being, then, creates that throwaway culture that leads to suffering, depriving so many of the right to live and to be happy (see Encyclical Letter *Laudato si'*, 44).

The Foundation was established to be a sign of the closeness of the Pope and of the Church to all, especially those communities that are marginalized and considered disposable, deprived of basic human rights and sharing at the table of the common good, as happens unfortunately with the native peoples, mestizos and African-Americans in Latin America. The Church is called to be close and to touch in the neighbour the flesh of Christ, which is also the measure of Christ's judgement (cf *Mt 25*).

The Foundation, despite the limited means available to it, embodies in its projects the preferential option for the poorest, highlighting their dignity (see Encyclical Letter *Laudato si'*, 158), through witness of Christ's charity, that gives, reaching out a hand to our brothers and sisters so that they can rise up, have hope again, and live a dignified life. Only in this way can they become protagonists of their own integral human development, recovering their dignity as human beings loved and wanted by God, also to contribute to the economic and social progress of their country with all the wealth that they conserve in their hearts and in their culture. And this human development will be everyone's work, as because it will be the fruit of a common effort that, through the means provided so generously by the ecclesial communities, turns rejection into an authentic resource, not only for a country but also for the benefit of all The humanity.

The Foundation, which finances many projects in support of native peoples, will find at the Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for the Pan-Amazon Region, to take place in Rome in October 2019, a source of inspiration for the future and for the evangelization of the Continent.

Allow me to thank the representatives of the Italian Episcopal Conference, who so generously and faithfully accompany the Foundation, as well as Catholic Organizations and donors who have offered an appreciated contribution for the financing of the projects. Sharing in the gratitude of those who benefited from this important help, I ask God to reward them with abundant spiritual blessings. I finally greet the Secretariat's colleagues in Bogotá and the dicastery, thanking them for their active commitment on behalf of their brothers and sisters in need. I encourage them in their work in support of integral human development and the common good in our American continent, so that the collaboration of all may contribute to creating a world that is increasingly just and humane, that sees the face of Christ in every brother and sister of the most marginalized populations of Latin America, following the example of Saint Teresa of Calcutta. I commend the celebrations of this anniversary to the maternal intercession of Our Lady of Guadalupe, venerated throughout the American Continent, and may the Lord bless the members of the Foundation and their benefactors.

From the Vatican, 20 November 2017

FRANCIS
