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Words of thanks of the Holy Father Francis at the end of the Spiritual Exercises (Ariccia, 23 February 2018)

The following are the words of thanks that the Holy Father Francis addressed this morning to the Preacher of the Spiritual Exercises, the Rev. José Tolentino de Mendonça, vice-rector of the Catholic University of Lisbon and Consultor of the Pontifical Council for Culture, at the end of the Spiritual Exercises in Ariccia.

Words of the Holy Father

[Addressing the Preacher] Father, I would like to thank you, on behalf of everyone, for this accompaniment in these days, which will be continued today with the day of fasting and prayer for South Sudan, the Congo and also Syria.

Thank you, Father, for having spoken to the Church, for having made us feel the Church, this little flock. And thank you for warning us not to “shrink” it with our bureaucratic worldliness! Thank you for reminding us that the Church is not a cage for the Holy Spirit, that the Spirit flies also outside it, and works out side it. And with the citations and the things that you have said, you have allowed us to see how He works on non-believers, on “pagans”, on people of other religious confessions: it is universal, it is the Spirit of God, Who is for everyone. Today too there are the “Cornelius”, the “centurions”, the “guardians of Peter’s jail”, who live an inner search or also know how to distinguish when there is something that calls. Thank you for this call to open ourselves up without fear, without rigidity, to be flexible in the Spirit and not mummified in our structures that close us up. Thank you, Father. And continue to pray for us. As the mother superior said to the nuns, “We are men!”, sinners, all of us. Thank you, Father. And may the Lord bless you.