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Audience with Directors and Staff of the newspaper “Avvenire”

At 11.45 today, in the Clementine Hall of the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the directors and staff of the daily newspaper “Avvenire”, accompanied by their families, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of its founding.

The following is the Pope’s address to those present during the meeting:

Address of the Holy Father

Dear friends of *Avvenire*,

In you I greet a laity working in a relevant and demanding field, that of communication. I greet the president of the Italian Episcopal Conference, Cardinal Gualtiero Bassetti, whom I thank for his words; I greet the secretary general, Monsignor Galantino, and Msgr. Semeraro, who chairs your board of directors.

I am happy to share this moment with you and to do so on the day dedicated to Saint Joseph the Worker. It is easy to become attached to the figure of Saint Joseph and rely on his intercession. But truly to become his friends we need to follow in his footsteps, which reveal a reflection of the style of God.

Joseph is *the man of silence*. At first glance, he may even seem to be the antithesis of the communicator. In reality, only by turning off the noise of the world and our own chatter does *listening* become possible, which remains the condition for any communication. The silence of Joseph is inhabited by the voice of God and generates that obedience of faith that shapes existence, allowing himself to be guided by His will.

Not by chance, Joseph is *the man who knows how to wake up and get up in the night*, without being discouraged by the burden of difficulty. He knows how to walk in the darkness of certain moments which he does not fully understand, strong in a calling that places him in front of the mystery, in which he agrees to let himself

be involved and to which he delivers himself without reserve.

Joseph is, then, the righteous man, capable of entrusting himself to the dream of God, carrying out his promises. He is the discreet and thoughtful *guardian*, who knows how to take responsibility for the people and situations that life has entrusted to him. He is the *educator* who – without claiming anything for himself – becomes a father for the fact of being, his capacity to accompany, to make life grow and to transmit *work*. We know the importance of this latter dimension, to which today's feast is linked. It is precisely to work, indeed, that the dignity of the person is strictly linked: not to money, nor to visibility or power, but to work. A work that gives a way to each person, whatever his or her role, to generate that entrepreneurship understood as "*actus personae*" (cf. Encyclical *Caritas in veritate*, 41), where the person and his family remain more important than efficiency as an end in itself.

On closer inspection, it would seem that the step from the carpenter's workshop in Nazareth to the editorial offices of *Avvenire* is not such a long one!

Certainly, in your "toolbox" there are technological instruments that have profoundly altered the profession, and even the very way of feeling and thinking, of living and communicating, along with an even greater willingness to collaborate among yourselves and to harmonize with the other agencies that belong to the Italian Episcopal Conference: the Agency *Sir*, *Tv2000* and the *InBlu* radio circuit. Similarly to what is happening in the communication sector of the Holy See, the convergence and interactivity enabled by digital platforms must promote synergies, integration and unitary management. This transformation requires training and refresher courses, in the awareness that attachment to the past could prove to be a pernicious temptation. Authentic servants of tradition are those who, in remembering it, can discern the signs of the times (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 11) and open new paths of the journey.

All this probably already forms part of your daily commitment within a technological development that redraws at global level the presence of the media, the possession of information and of knowledge. In this scenario, the Church feels her own voice cannot be lacking, so as to be faithful to the mission that calls her to announce to all the Gospel of mercy. The media offer us enormous potential to contribute, with our pastoral service, to the culture of encounter.

To put this mission into focus, let us enter a moment together in the carpenter's workshop; let us return to the school of Saint Joseph, where communication is redirected to truth, beauty and the common good.

As I have had the opportunity to observe, today "The speed with which information is communicated exceeds our capacity for reflection and judgement, and this does not make for more balanced and proper forms of self-expression" (*Message for the 48th World Day of Social Communications*, 1 June 2014). Also as a Church we are exposed to the impact and influence of a culture of haste and superficiality: more than experience, what counts is that which is immediate, within reach, and which can be consumed immediately; more than exchange and exploration, there is a risk of exposure the pastoral of applause, to a levelling out of thought, a widespread confusion of opinions that do not meet.

The carpenter of Nazareth reminds us of the urgency of finding a sense of healthy slowness, of calm and patience. With his silence he reminds us that everything starts from listening, from transcending ourselves so as to open up to the word and the history of the other.

For us, silence implies two things. On the one hand, do not lose your cultural roots, do not let them deteriorate. The way to take care of them is always to rediscover ourselves in the Lord Jesus, to make our own His feelings of humility and tenderness, of gratuitousness and compassion. On the other hand, a Church that lives in contemplation of the countenance of Christ does not struggle to recognize it in the *face of man*. And from this face she can let herself be challenged, overcoming short-sightedness, deformations and discrimination.

Dialogue overcomes suspicion and defeats fear. Dialogue finds common ground, establishes relationships, develops a culture of reciprocity. The Church, while presenting herself as the architect of dialogue, is purified

and helped by dialogue in the same understanding of faith.

In turn, dear friends of *Avvenire*, keep the legacy of the fathers. Do not tire of *looking for the truth with humility*, starting from a habitual frequentation of the Good News of the Gospel. May this be the editorial line, to which you can link your integrity: the profession demands this, so high is its dignity. You will then have the light for discernment and true words to grasp reality and call it by name, avoiding reducing it to a caricature.

Let yourselves be challenged by what happens. Listen, examine further, compare. Keep away from the blind alleys where there debate those who presume they have already understood everything. Help overcome sterile and harmful oppositions. With the testimony of your work, become travelling companions for anyone who gives themselves for justice and peace.

Joseph, a man of silence and listening, is also the man who in the night does not lose the ability to dream, to trust and to entrust. Joseph's dream is vision, courage, obedience that moves the heart and legs. This saint is the icon of our holy people, who recognize in God the reference that embraces the whole life with a single meaning.

This faith involves action and inspires good habits. It is an outlook that accompanies processes, transforms problems into opportunities, improves and builds the city of man. I hope that you will know how to refine and always defend this look; to overcome the temptation not to see, to remove or exclude. And I encourage you not to discriminate; not to consider anyone as excess; not to be satisfied with what everyone sees. May no-one dictate your agenda other than the poor, the last and the suffering. Do not join the ranks of those who run to tell that part of reality that is already illuminated by the lights of the world. Start from the suburbs, aware that they are not the end, but the beginning of the city.

As Paul VI warned, Catholic newspapers should not "give things that make an impression or that attract clients. We must do good to those who listen, we must educate them to think, to judge" (*Address to social communications workers*, 27 November 1971). The Catholic communicator avoids the rigidities that suffocate or imprison. He does not "cage the Holy Spirit", but rather tries to "let him fly, to let him breathe in his soul" (*ibid.*). He ensures that reality never gives way to appearance, beauty to vulgarity, social friendship to conflict. He cultivates and strengthens every seedling of life and good.

May you not be stopped by difficulties: just go back a moment to the atmosphere of fifty years ago during the gestation of the *Avvenire* project to remember how much perplexity and resistance, how much distrust and opposition sought to curb the Paul VI's desire for a Catholic daily of national character.

Finally, Joseph is the *guardian* saint, the man of *practicality* and *closeness*, In the end, it is precisely in this willingness to take care of the other that the secret of his paternity resides, that which truly made him a father. The existence of the spouse of the Virgin recalls and supports a Church that neither accepts the reduction of faith to the private and intimate sphere, nor resigns herself to a moral relativism that disengages and disorients.

May you too express a Church that does not look at reality from outside or from above, but which comes down into it, mixes with it, dwells in it and – on the strength of the service she offers – inspires and increases the hope of all.

I encourage you to safeguard the substance of the present; to avoid easily consumed information that does not require commitment; to reconstruct contexts and explain causes; to bring people ever closer, with great respect; to have a stake in the bonds that constitute and reinforce the community.

Nothing creates closeness, inspires attitudes of closeness, favours encounter and promotes solidarity and conscience like mercy. Making yourselves bearers of mercy is the way to contribute to the renewal of society in the interest of the common good, the dignity of each person and of full citizenship.

There is a need to give voice to the values embodied in the collective memory and in the cultural and spiritual reserves of the population, to contribute to bringing to the social, political and economic world the sensibility and guidance of the social doctrine of the Church, since we, first of all, are its faithful interpreters and witnesses.

Do not be afraid to be involved. Words – true ones – bear weight: only those who embody them in life can support them. Besides, this witness contributes to your own reliability. A passionate and joyful witness. It is the conclusive wish I address to you, again adopting the words of Blessed Paul VI: “There is a need for love for the cause: if we do not love the cause we will achieve little, we will tire immediately, we will encounter difficulties, we will encounter even I dare say inconveniences, polemics, debts... We must have a great love for the cause, to say that we believe in what we are doing and what we want to do” (*ibid*).

I beg you, may your prayer for me be a part of this love. Thank you!
