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Audience with the participants in the General Chapter of the Oblates of Saint Joseph (Josephites of Asti)

At 12.10 today, in the Consistory Hall of the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the participants in the Seventeenth General Chapter of the Oblates of Saint Joseph (Josephites of Asti) which has taken place in Rome, at the General Curia, from 3 to 31 August, on the theme: "Et vocat ad se eos... ut essent cum illo et ut mitteret eos praedicare" (*"And He called to Him those he wanted ... that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach"*).

The following is the Holy Father's address to those present:

Address of the Holy Father

Dear brothers, good morning!

I like Saint Joseph, he has such strength! For more than forty years I have recited a prayer I found in an old French missal that says of Saint Joseph: "... *dont la puissance sait rendre possible les choses impossibles.*" The power of Saint Joseph. He never, never said no. We must take courage from this. I am pleased to meet you at your General Chapter and I warmly welcome you. I address a particular thought to Fr. Jan Pelczarski, elected Superior General in these days, and I send to him and his counsellors my best wishes for their new mission. At the same time, I express gratitude to Father Michele Piscopo for his generous service at the head of the Congregation. Thank you. Best wishes! I extend my sentiments of affection to the entire religious family that you, the Capitular Fathers, represent here, encouraging you all to persevere in your respective apostolic sphere.

The General Chapter of an institute of consecrated life is a special moment of grace, certainly for its members and its communities, but also beyond them, for many other ecclesial realities: parishes, families, and lay groups, in various connected ways. The mission transmitted to you by the founder, Saint Joseph Marelli, shows your peculiar charism to reproduce in life and in the apostolate the ideal of service as Saint Joseph of Nazareth lived it, starting from the imitation of his discreet, humble and industrious lifestyle. He lived with fidelity and simplicity

his vocation as custodian of Mary and of Jesus. He was close to his bride in joyful and difficult moments, and with her he established a wonderful familiarity with Jesus, Whom he had continually before his eyes.

Rich in the industrious simplicity of Saint Joseph, you are called to be witnesses in the world of a particular message, of a consoling good news: that God uses all, with preference for the smallest and humanly disadvantaged, to plant and nurture His Kingdom. May the prospect of serving Jesus in the Church and in our brothers and sisters, with particular attention to the young and the humblest, always influence your life and your joy. In this regard, may the words of your holy Founder inspire you, which are always very timely: "Poor Josephites of the Hospice, minor priests, you are nothing and you have none of what they consider positions for the future, and in the meantime the Lord uses you too for the good of souls. You might even say: 'servants inutiles sumus' ['we are useless servants'], but strive to do the part that divine will, by means of who represents it, assigns to you day by day; and let it also be that men 'videant opera vestra bona et glorificent Patrem vestrum here in coelis est' ['see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven'] (Epistolary, Letter 241).

I encourage you, therefore, to continue to live and work in the Church and in the world with the simple and essential virtues of the Bridegroom of the Virgin Mary: humility, which attracts the benevolence of the Father; intimacy with the Lord, Who sanctifies all Christian activity; silence and concealment, united with zeal and industriousness in favour of the Lord's will, in the spirit of that happy synthesis left to you by Marelo as a motto and program: "Be Carthusians in the house and apostles outside the home". May this teaching, always alive in your spirit, commit all of you, dear brothers, to preserve in religious houses a climate of recollection and prayer, fostered by silence and opportune community meetings. The family spirit cements the union of the communities and of the whole Congregation.

Saint Joseph Marelo exhorted his spiritual children to put in first place love and obedience to the teachings and directives of the Supreme Pontiff. Those were times of rationalism intolerant to every spiritual dogma; ours are times of rampant relativism that undermines the edifice of faith and strips of meaning the very idea of Christian fidelity. Therefore, the mandate of your Founder is to be everywhere witnesses of love and fidelity to Christ and to His Church. To the people of every part of the world and to young people in particular, to whom your apostolate is addressed, you teach, with life and words, that the example of Joseph of Nazareth, fully consecrated to the service of Jesus, it is still the simplest, surest and most appealing way to realize life and the Christian vocation in a full and joyful way.

Faced with a superficial culture that exalts the possession of material goods, promising happiness through dangerous shortcuts, you do not fail to stimulate young people to temper the spirit and to form a mature personality, capable of strength but also of tenderness. And the greatest joy is to talk to young people about Jesus Christ, reading the Gospel with them, comparing it with life ... This is the best way to build a solid future.

May the intercession of the two Josephs, the Patron of the universal Church and your Founder, make the Chapter's work fruitful, and support the mission of the Marellian family: Oblates, aggregates and laypeople who share your spirituality. I bless you heartily, and ask you, please, to pray for me.
