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Audience of the Holy Father with the Italian State Police Association

At midday today, in the Paul VI Hall, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the Italian State Police Association and addressed the following words to them:

Address of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

I am pleased to meet you today and to share, together with your entire National Association, wishes and resolutions. I thank your President, the Head of the State Police, for his words and I greet all those who are part of the Association. It unites the members of the Police still in operation and those who, even having finished their service, still feel they are part of it, and carry forward its ideals. The Association proposes to “pass on the traditions of the State Police” (Statute, Article 2.1) favouring the union of all its members, retired or in service. This values the experience of the elderly members and their historical-cultural heritage, which should not be dispersed, but instead handed down and enhanced, helping to strengthen the link between the generations, sometimes unfortunately compromised in the context of social relations.

It is very significant that some members of the public can participate in your Association: even if they are not members of the Police, they assume their values and their commitment. You thus constitute a great family: a family open to all those who wish to commit themselves to the common good, starting out from your principles; a family that would like to involve and welcome every citizen, to spread a culture of legality, respect and security.

Without these foundations, no social context can achieve the common good, but it will sooner or later become a tangle of personal interests, unrelated or even opposed to each other. The good of a society, in fact, is not guaranteed by the well-being of the majority, or by the respect of the rights of “almost all”. Instead, it is provided by the good of the collective as a group of people, so that, as long as one suffers, “all the members suffer with him” (cf. *1 Cor* 12:26).

When legality and security are lacking, the weakest are the first to be damaged, because they have fewer means to defend themselves and to provide for themselves. In fact, every injustice affects above all the poorest, and all those who in various ways can be called the “last”. Last in our world are those who leave their land because of war and misery, and must start from scratch in a completely new context; the last are those who have lost their homes and jobs, and are struggling to support their families; the last are those who live marginalized and sick, or who are victims of injustice and abuse. Be close to all of them when you try to prevent crime and when you work to combat bullying and fraud; when you put your time and energy in the training of young people and in the supervision of schools, in the protection of the territory and of the artistic heritage; in organizing conferences and training for a more active and aware citizenship.

It is a cause for satisfaction and hope to see how many areas are reached by your initiatives, moved not by attention to a single aspect of civil life, but by care for people, whom you reach in every situation of need or in the snares in which they may find themselves, like a good parent who does not limit him- or herself to telling a child once and for all to beware of dangers, but who takes an interest in the various pitfalls they may face, gradually seeking to instruct and accompanying him.

I thank you, therefore, for the message of sharing and solidarity you transmit, with efforts often hidden from view. Be increasingly promoters of this loving care of people, who represent the synthesis of your very ideals, knowing that it is able to generate new relations and to give life to a more just order. Indeed, with your effort you contribute to adding, in the mixture of society, the leaven of equality and fraternity, which never fail to bear fruit.

We see this well if we consider the first centuries of Christianity: how the values transmitted by the Gospel radically transformed life and the mentality of all human society. It is thus that the proclamation of the brotherhood among all men, brought by Jesus’ first disciples and their successors, gradually undermined the bases by which slavery was justified, until it was perceived as an iniquitous institution, leading to its extinction. In the same way, the message of a God Who dies on the cross without accusing but forgiving, and accepting suffering and humiliation out of love, overturned the hierarchy of values and gave new dignity to the destitute and the excluded. Furthermore, Jesus’ actions towards women, the sick and the children marked a profound cultural turning point in relation to everything that came “before Christ”, and He branded as iniquitous for the future centuries any attitude of violence or disinterest towards these groups of people.

I briefly recalled some fruits of the spread of the Gospel message in human society, so as always to keep in mind how the rise of the values of solidarity and peace, which find their peak in the person and message of Jesus, have been capable, and are still capable today, of renewing interpersonal and social relationships. It is precisely what we hope for our time, knowing that when we practice charity, it changes the world and history, even if we do not immediately notice its effects. This is our goal, and this is what you contribute to doing as a National Association of State Police whenever, following the example of your Patron Saint Michael the Archangel, you oppose everything that hurts or destroys man.

As I greet you, I thank you for the work you carry out with such dedication, and in asking for your prayers for me, I invoke God’s blessing and protection on your Association and all of its members. Thank you.