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Audience of the Holy Father with the pilgrims of the Archdiocese of Kraków

At 8.30 this morning, in the Paul VI Hall, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the participants in the pilgrimage of the archdiocese of Kraków.

The following is the Pope's greeting to those present:

Greeting of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters,

Welcome! And thank you for your warm affection! I thank Archbishop Marek for his kind words, and I fraternally greet the Cardinal Stanislaw and bishops present.

You have come as representatives of the holy Church of God which is in Kraków, which welcomed me with open arms in the summer of 2016. You have come together with your pastors and consecrated persons, to thank God for the life and papacy of Saint John Paul II, as we near the 40th anniversary of his election to the See of Peter. I cordially greet you all, especially the poor, the sick, and the many young people who are participating in the pilgrimage.

Saint John Paul II enriched the universal Church with a great abundance of gifts, which for the most part he had inherited from the treasury of faith and holiness of your land and of your Church. He carried in his heart and, so to say, in his flesh the witness of the saints of Kraków: from Saint Stanislaus and Saint Jadwiga, Queen of Poland, to Saint Albert and Saint Faustina. From them he learned boundless devotion to God and the great sensitivity for every man; devotion and sensitivity that were manifested in his priestly, episcopal and papal ministry. He received from God the great gift of knowing how to read the signs of the times in the light of the Gospel, and he made this fruitful to the benefit of the path of his people, of your people, who in their various sufferings have never lost faith in God or fidelity to their own culture, rooted in the Christian spirit.

Faithful to these roots, he sought to ensure that the Church rose up as the guardian of the inalienable rights of man, of the family and of peoples, to be a sign of peace, justice and integral development for the entire human family. At the same time, he always underlined the priority of grace and obedience to God's will, before any human calculation.

This rich legacy Saint John Paul II left us is for us, and in a special way for his compatriots, a challenge to be faithful to Christ and to respond with joyful devotion to the call to holiness that the Lord addresses to each and every one of us, in our specific personal, family and social situation.

Dear brothers and sisters, Saint John Paul II never ceases to watch over his Church which is in Kraków, which he greatly loved! From heaven he accompanies your path: the families, the young and grandparents, priests, women religious and all consecrated persons; the most disadvantaged, the suffering. I too entrust myself with you to his intercession. I thank you for this visit of yours, and I bless you all and the entire diocesan community of Kraków. Please, do not forget to pray for me.

And, before giving you my blessing, I invite you all to pray a Hail Mary to Our Lady.

[Blessing]
