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Audience with the participants in the 15th General Chapter of the Congregation of the Missionaries of Saint Charles Borromeo (Scalabrinians)

At 11.05 this morning, in the Consistory Hall of the Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the participants in the 15th General Chapter of the Congregation of the Missionaries of Saint Charles Borromeo (Scalabrinians). The Pope gave an unscripted address.

The following is the address the Holy Father had prepared for the event and which was handed to those present:

Prepared Address of the Holy Father

Dear brothers,

I am pleased to meet you on the occasion of your General Chapter and to address to each one of you my cordial greeting, starting with the new Superior General, whom I thank for his words and to whom I wish all the best for his ministry.

At the centre of your reflection in these days you have placed the theme *Encounter and walk*. «*Jesus walked along with them*» (cfr Lk 24: 15). The reference is to the story of the disciples of Emmaus, who meet the risen Jesus along the way. He approaches to walk with them and to explain the Scriptures to them. The Chapter is a privileged moment of grace for your religious family, called to assume this dual attitude of the divine Master towards those who are the object of your pastoral care: *to proclaim the Word to them* and *to walk with them*. It is a matter of finding ever new ways of evangelization and of proximity, in order to fulfil your charism with dynamic fidelity, which places you at the service of migrants.

Faced with today's migratory phenomenon, very vast and complex, your Congregation draws the necessary spiritual resources from the prophetic witness of the Founder, as relevant as ever, and from the experience of many confreres who have worked with great generosity from their origins, 131 years ago, up to the present day. Today, as before, your mission takes place in difficult contexts, sometimes characterized by attitudes of

suspicion and prejudice, or even rejection of the foreign person. This motivates you even more towards a courageous and persevering apostolic enthusiasm, to bring Christ's love to those who, far from their homeland and family, are in danger of feeling far from God.

The biblical icon of the disciples of Emmaus shows that Jesus explains the Scriptures as He walks with them. Evangelization is carried out by walking with people. First of all we must *listen* to people, listen to the history of the communities; above all to their disappointed hopes, the expectations of the hearts, the trials of the faith ... First of all listen, and do so in an attitude of compassion, of sincere closeness. How many stories there are in the hearts of migrants! Stories both beautiful and ugly. The danger is that these stories are removed: the ugly ones, obviously; but also the beautiful ones, because remembering makes them suffer. And so the risk is that the migrant becomes an uprooted person, faceless, without identity. But this is a very serious loss, which can be avoided by listening, walking alongside people and migrant communities. Being able to do so is a grace, and it is also a resource for the Church and for the world.

After listening, like Jesus, we must *give the Word and the sign of the broken Bread*. It is fascinating to make Jesus known through the Scriptures to people of different cultures; tell them about His mystery of love: incarnation, passion, death and resurrection. To share with migrants the amazement of a salvation that is historical, is situated, yet it is universal, it is for everyone! To enjoy together the joy of reading the Bible, to welcome in it the Word of God for us today; to discover that through the Scriptures God wants to give these real men and women His Word of salvation, of hope, of liberation, of peace. And then, to invite to the table of the Eucharist, where words matter less and there remains the Sign of the Broken Bread: the Sacrament in which all is summarized, in which the Son of God offers His Body and His Blood for the life of those travellers, of those men and women who risk losing hope and, so as not to suffer, prefer to cancel the past.

The Risen Christ sends you too today, in the Church, to walk alongside the many brothers and sisters who travel their way from Jerusalem to Emmaus as migrants. It is an ancient and always new mission; tiring, and sometimes painful, but also able to make you cry with joy. I encourage you to carry it forward with your own style, matured in the fruitful encounter between the charism of Blessed Scalabrini and our historical circumstances. This style is part of the attention you place on the dignity of the human person, especially where it is most wounded and threatened. This is part of your educational commitment to the new generations, catechesis and family pastoral care.

Dear brothers, let us not forget that the condition of every mission in the Church is that we are united to the Risen Christ as branches to the vine (cf. *Jn 15: 1-9*). Otherwise what we are doing is social activism. This is why I repeat to you the exhortation to *remain in Him*. First of all we need to let ourselves be renewed in faith and hope by Jesus Who lives in the Word and in the Eucharist, but also in sacramental forgiveness. We need to be with Him in silent adoration, in the *lectio divina*, in the Rosary of the Virgin Mary.

And we need a healthy *community life*, simple but not trivial, not mediocre. I appreciated it when the Superior General said that the Spirit calls you to *live communion together in diversity*. Yes, as witness but first of all as a joy for you, as a human and Christian, ecclesial wealth. I also encourage you to continue the journey of sharing with the laity, facing together the challenges of today; as well as to take care of the itineraries of ongoing formation.

Brothers, I thank you for this encounter. I pray for your Chapter, that it may bear many good fruits! I ask that, by the intercession of Mary our Mother, of Saint Charles Borromeo and of the Blessed Giovanni Battista Scalabrini. I heartily bless you and all the Scalabrinian Missionaries. And you too, please, do not forget to pray for me.
