



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE
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BIURO PRASOWE STOLICY APOSTOLSKIEJ دار الصحافة التابعة للكرسي الرسولي

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Audience with the participants in the 186th General Chapter of the Order of Discalced Augustinians

At 9:20 this morning, in the Clementine Hall of the Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the participants in the 186th General Chapter of the Order of Discalced Augustinians.

The following is the Pope's address to those present during the Audience:

Address of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters,

Providence wanted me to meet you today, Discalced Augustinians, and tomorrow your brothers of the Order of Saint Augustine - brothers, cousins, friends, enemies, you never know! Let us praise God for the charisms he has inspired and continues to inspire in the Church through the witness of the great Shepherd and Doctor of Hippo.

I thank the Prior General for the words with which he introduced this meeting, which concludes your conference on the occasion of what you call the "Year of the Charism" – beautiful!

I would like to tell you first of all that I appreciate in you the joy of being Augustinians: "Happy to serve the Most High in a spirit of humility" – it seems like a Franciscan motto, but in reality it is simply evangelical. Moreover, Saint Augustine is one of those figures who make felt the fascination of God, who draw us to Jesus Christ, who draw us to the Word of God. He is a giant of Christian thought, but the Lord also gave him the vocation and mission of fraternity. He did not close himself in the vast horizon of his mind, but remained open to the people of God and to the brothers and sisters who shared community life with him. Even as a priest and bishop he lived like a monk, despite his pastoral commitments, and upon his death he left many monasteries for men and women.

You Discalced Augustinians have your roots in this long religious tradition begun by Saint Augustine, as the Prior General recalled a moment ago. I encourage you to love and deepen these roots ever anew – to go to your roots – seeking to draw from them, in prayer and in community discernment, the lifeblood for your presence in the Church and the world today. To be modern, some believe that it is necessary to detach oneself from roots. And this causes ruin, because roots, tradition, are the guarantee of the future. It is not a museum, it is a true tradition, and the roots are the tradition that bring you the sap to make the tree grow, bloom, and bear fruit. Never detach yourself from roots in order to be modern, that is suicide. Prayer and penance never cease to be the cornerstones on which Christian witness is based, a witness that in certain contexts goes completely against the tide, but which, accompanied by humility and charity, knows how to speak to the hearts of many men and women in our time too. Moreover, the Popes have asked your “ancestors” to be available for evangelization, and in this way you have taken on that apostolic dimension which is very present in the Founding Father.

The qualification of “discalced” expresses the need for poverty, detachment, and trust in Divine Providence. There is a liturgical hymn, which is used on the feast of Saint John the Baptist and says that the people went “with a barefoot soul” to be baptized: barefoot not only because they do not wear socks – I see that you have shoes, one at least... The barefoot soul, this is the charism. This is an evangelical requirement that the Spirit makes us feel more strongly at certain moments in the Church’s journey. And we must always be attentive and docile to the voice of the Spirit: He is the protagonist, He is the one who makes the Church grow! Not us, Him. The Holy Spirit is the wind that blows and makes the Church move forward, with that great force of evangelization.

In particular, this year you wished to emphasize the vow of humility, your fourth characteristic vow. I congratulate you on this choice and I share the discernment of which the Prior Father has been the spokesman: this vow of humility is a “key”, a key that opens the heart of God and the hearts of men. And it opens first of all your own hearts to be faithful to the original charism, to always that you are disciple-missionaries, available to the calls of God.

Humility is something you cannot take in hand: there is or is not, it is a gift. You cannot take it in your hand. I remember a man religious who was very vain, very vain – this is historical – he is still alive. His superiors always told him: “You must be more humble, more humble...”. And at the end he said: “I will do thirty days of exercises so that the Lord may give me the grace of humility”. And when he came back he said: “Thank God. I was so vain, so vain, but after the exercises I conquered all my passions!” He had found humility. Humility is something that comes by itself. Thank God, it comes but you cannot measure it.

The Spirit blows in the sails of the Church also the wind of the *missio ad gentes*, and you have known how to be ready to depart. We live in an age in which the *missio ad gentes* is renewing itself, also through a crisis that that we want to be of growth, of fidelity to the mandate of the Risen Lord, a mandate that retains all its strength and relevance. I too join you with emotion in remembering the Augustinian missionaries who gave their lives for the Gospel in different parts of the world. And I see with pleasure that you treasure these witnesses of the past in order to renew your readiness for mission today, in the forms that Vatican Council II and the current challenges ask of us.

Dear brothers, in grateful remembrance of your journey, or better, of the journey that the Lord has made you do (cf. *Dt 8: 2*), the meaning of this “Year of the Charism” can be fully understood. It is not something self-referential – no, it must not be this – but a living community that wishes to walk with the living Christ, it is this that you want; not a self-referentiality but the desire to walk in Christ, in the living Christ.

“Happy to serve the Most High in a spirit of humility”. Continue in this way! May the Lord bless you, and Our Lady and Saint Augustine keep you. And please, do not forget to pray for me. Thank you!
