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Audience with the participants in the General Chapter of the Roman Union of the Order of Saint Ursula

At 12.30 today, in the Clementine Hall, Pope Francis received in audience the participants in the General Chapter of the Roman Union of the Order of Saint Ursula and gave the following address:

Address of the Holy Father

Dear sisters!

I extend a cordial greeting to each of you, and I thank the Prior General. The General Chapter is an event of grace, an ecclesial event: even when it is celebrated in the strictest confidence, it belongs to the life of the Church. All this is particularly evident with reference to your General Chapter, which has as its theme: “*A global community moving into new life*”. Challenging!

The juxtaposition of these two words: *community* and *global*, leads us immediately to ask questions, as it seems contradictory. Generally, the term *community* is used to indicate a group of people who share a rather restricted environment: such as the religious community, the parish community, in short, a circumscribed form of God’s people; the adjective *global*, instead, is used to attribute to an entity to which one refers a universal reach, which arrives at the ends of the earth. It seems that these two terms are not meant to be together, yet, this is the reality in which we live and with which we have to deal.

We find ourselves in a time increasingly interconnected and inhabited by peoples who have come to be part of a “global community”. We all find ourselves closer to the great challenges we face. Today, no one can say any more: “This does not concern me”. The protection of human rights, the conquest of freedom of thought and religion, the evangelization of the distant and the near - beginning with oneself -, social justice, the protection of the environment and the common search for sustainable development, the advent of a humanistic economy, of a policy that is truly at the service of man are not “other people’s problems”, but rather they are *our* problems, they are *my* problems; they no longer concern only a people or a nation, but the whole world. For example, the

burning Amazon is not just a problem in that region, it is a global problem; the migration phenomenon does not affect only some states, but the international community; and so on.

Here then is the hopeful invitation expressed in the second part of your theme: "Moving into new life". These words take up what Saint Angela Merici often said: "Make new life". But how is it possible to go towards a new life?

It is possible by opening the doors to Christ and imitating Him in charity, that is, in becoming a neighbour to every man and woman of every language, people and nation, with great respect for the diversity of the other, both cultural and religious.

In the same way you too, dear sisters, with respect for your personal identities and the charismatic originality that characterizes you, are called to "make new life", to bring a breath of new life to the ends of the earth, knowing how to stay responsibly in the midst of different peoples, nations and cultures, so that the message of faith, hope and charity that you bring may attract people to Christ.

What we live in is an international and intercultural context, so I invite you to seek, in a climate of prayer, the appropriate instruments so that in pursuing your individual and community objectives you do not lose sight of the vast horizon of humanity for which Jesus gave His life. In this regard, it is my hope that the entire Roman Union of the Order of Saint Ursula will take courageous missionary decisions, capable of transforming everything, so that customs, styles, schedules, languages and structures of government and apostolate may become adequate channels for the evangelization of today's world. To do this, a pastoral conversion of the structures is necessary, so that they are increasingly oriented towards the mission, are "outgoing" - because if they are not outgoing, they are not Church - to encourage the response of all those to whom Jesus offers His friendship.

More than ever, we need consistent *witness*. Consistent *witness*, please, do not forget! The Church needs men and women who, beginning with their own personal conversion, are able to offer to listening and understanding to others, together with the joy of the Gospel.

You, dear sisters, are called to bear this witness as faithful daughters of Saint Angela Merici, finding renewed inspiration in her charism, to respond to the thirst of this world, which ultimately thirsts for Christ and thirsts for His Mercy.

In this context I would like to encourage you to continue with enthusiasm your educational task, especially at a time when young people are overburdened with an enormous amount of information and disoriented by the speed with which it is transmitted. Consequently, there is a need for an educational approach that teaches us to think critically, to discern the pros and cons of the means we use, and that can show young people a path of maturation in values.

You know well that a serious human growth in the awareness of values is only possible by combining education with the proclamation of the Gospel. This is done primarily through *personal witness*, so I invite you to take good care of your *spiritual life*.

Love for people is a force that promotes the encounter with God and the spiritual life itself, because those who love their neighbour love God, while those who do not love their brother "walk in darkness", "remain in death" and "have not known God" (1 Jn 2: 11; 3: 14; 4: 8). When we live the *spirit of encounter*, when we approach others with the intention of seeking their good, we open up our inner self to receive the most beautiful gifts of the Lord. Every time we meet with a brother and sister in love, our faith is more enlightened to recognize God. For this reason, if you wish to *grow in spiritual life*, you cannot give up *being missionaries*.

Dear Sisters, I ask God, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, Saint Ursula and Saint Angela Merici, to enlighten you in your discernment and in your decisions, and to give you the strength to put them into practice, always mindful that the ultimate goal of life is to give glory to God. May the grace of the Lord always accompany

you and sustain you on your journey. From the heart I bless you and all your communities. All of you! And you, please, do not forget to pray for me. Thank you!
