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HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIÈGE PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS
OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE SALA DE IMPRENSA DA SANTA SÉ
BIURO PRASOWE STOLICY APOSTOLSKIEJ دار الصحافة التابعة للكرسي الرسولي

N. 200221d

Friday 21.02.2020

Audience with participants in the Study Visit of young priests and monks of the Oriental Orthodox Churches

Today, in the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the participants in the study visit of young priests and monks of the Oriental Orthodox Church, and addressed the following words to them:

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Address of the Holy Father

Dear Brothers,

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (*2 Cor* 1:2). With these words of the Apostle Paul, I would like to offer you a warm welcome and to share with you the joy your visit brings me. I cordially greet Archbishop Barsamian and Bishop El-Soryani, who are accompanying you. Through you, I wish also to send a special greeting to my venerable and dear brothers, the Heads of the Oriental Orthodox Churches.

Every visit brings a sharing of gifts. When the Mother of God visited Elizabeth, she shared her joy at having receiving God’s gift. Elizabeth, who at Mary’s greeting felt the child leap in her womb, was herself filled with the gift of the Holy Spirit and blessed her cousin (cf. *Lk* 1:39-42). Like Mary and Elizabeth, the Churches carry with them a variety of gifts of the Spirit, to be shared for their mutual joy and benefit. When we Christians visit one another, and encounter one another in the love of the Lord, we are blessed to be able to exchange these gifts. We can receive what the Holy Spirit has sown in others as a gift for ourselves. Your visit, then, is not only an opportunity for you to grow in knowledge of the Catholic Church, but also a chance for us Catholics to receive the gift of the Spirit that you bring. Your presence makes possible this sharing of gifts and is a source of joy.

The Apostle Paul also says: “I give thanks to God always for you because of the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus” (*1 Cor* 1:4). Today I too give thanks for the same reason, for the grace of God bestowed upon you. Everything begins there, with our acknowledgment of grace, with our recognition of God’s gracious

work, with our belief that he is the source of the goodness within us. This is the beauty of the Christian vision of life. And it is also the proper way for us to welcome our brothers, as the Apostle teaches. I am grateful, then, for you, for the grace that you have received in your lives and your traditions, for your saying “yes” to your priesthood and your monastic life, and for the witness given by your Oriental Orthodox Churches. For yours are Churches that have sealed their faith in Christ in blood and that continue to sow seeds of faith and hope, even in areas often, tragically, scarred by violence and war.

I hope that each of you has had a positive experience of the Catholic Church and the city of Rome, and that you have felt not so much as guests, but as brothers. The Lord is pleased with this brotherly affection between us. May your visit and those that, with God’s help will follow in the future, be a source of joy and give glory to the Lord! May your presence become a small but fruitful seed that will bear fruit in visible communion between us, in that full unity that Jesus ardently desires (cf. *Jn* 17:21).

Dear brothers, I thank you once more for your visit and I assure you of a remembrance in my prayers. I also trust in your own prayer for myself and my ministry. May the Lord bless you and the Mother of God protect you. And now, if you would like, we can pray together, each in his own language, the Our Father.

[Our Father]