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Message of His Holiness Pope Francis to participants in the webinar promoted by the Women's Consultation Group of the Pontifical Council for Culture, "Women Read Pope Francis: reading, reflection and music"

The following is the message sent by the Holy Father Francis to participants in the webinar promoted by the Women's Consultation Group of the Pontifical Council for Culture, which took place yesterday, on the theme "Women Read Pope Francis: reading, reflection and music":

Message of the Holy Father

Dear Friends,

I offer a warm greeting to you, the Women's Consultation Group of the Pontifical Council for Culture, on the occasion of the seminar "*Women Read Pope Francis: Reading, Reflection and Music*", a series of meetings that now begins with the theme "*Evangelii Gaudium*".

Your gathering today highlights the novelty that you represent within the Roman Curia. For the first time, a Dicastery has involved a group of women by making them protagonists in developing cultural projects and approaches, and not simply to deal with women's issues. Your Consultation Group is made up of women engaged in different sectors of the life of society and reflecting cultural and religious visions of the world that, however different, converge on the goal of working together in mutual respect.

For your reading programme, you have chosen three of my writings: the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, the Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'* and the *Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together*. These works are devoted, respectively, to the themes of evangelization, creation and fraternity. Your choice is significant, reflecting, in the spirit of the Consultation Group, a rich diversity striving to seek areas of agreement and fellowship in dialogue.

It is significant too, that your Conference is being held under the aegis of a great woman who in 2012 was proclaimed a Doctor of the Church: Saint Hildegard of Bingen. Like Saint Francis of Assisi, she composed a harmonious hymn in which she celebrated and praised the Lord *of* and *in* creation. Hildegard united scientific knowledge and spirituality. For a thousand years, she has masterfully taught men and women through her writings, her commentaries and her art. She broke with the customs of her time, which prevented women from study and access to libraries, and, as abbess, she also demanded this for her sisters. She learned to sing and compose music, which for her was a means of drawing nearer to God. For Hildegard, music was not only an art or science; it was also a liturgy.

Your aim in this gathering is to create a dialogue between intellect and spirituality, between unity and diversity, between music and liturgy, with one fundamental goal, that of universal friendship and trust. You do this with a feminine voice that desires to help heal an ailing world. Your reading programme can provide particular insights into the theme of social and cultural encounter and contribute to peace, for women have the gift of offering a wisdom that can heal, forgive, reinvent and renew.

In the history of salvation, it was a woman who welcomed God's Word. Women too kept alive the flame of faith in the dark night, awaiting and then proclaiming the Resurrection. Women find deep and joyful fulfilment in precisely these two acts: welcoming and proclaiming. They are the protagonists of a Church that goes forth, listening and caring for the needs of others, capable of fostering true processes of justice and bringing the warmth of a home to the various social environments where they find themselves. Listening, reflection and loving activity: these are the elements of a joy ever renewed and shared with others through feminine insight, the care of creation, the gestation of a more just world, and the creation of a dialogue that respects and values differences.

I encourage you, then to be bearers of a message of peace and renewal. To be a presence that, with humility and courage, is able to understand and welcome newness and inspire the hope of a more fraternal world. I accompany you in my thoughts and prayers before God, and I ask you, please, to do the same for me. Thank you!

Rome, Saint John Lateran, 7 October 2020
