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Video message of the Holy Father Francis on the occasion of the presentation of the book "Seeking and Finding God's Will. A Practical Guide to the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius of Loyola" by Father Miguel Ángel Fiorito

The following is the text of the video message sent by the Holy Father Francis on the occasion of the publication of the book "Seeking and Finding God's Will. A Practical Guide to the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius of Loyola" by Father Miguel Ángel Fiorito, S.J., published by Ancora, and which will be on sale tomorrow, Tuesday 11 May, with a preface by Pope Francis:

Video Message of the Holy Father

"Help" is the key word in the short prologue with which Miguel Ángel Fiorito introduces us to his book *Seeking and Finding God's Will*. It is a veritable goldmine for entering into the soul of the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius. We, his disciples, used to call Fiorito 'the master'. The aids he gave us were simple but necessary. This book presents them in an open or, as we would say today, interactive way. I will dwell on a few things that were good for me, and which I hope they will do good for others.

Fiorito insists twice that his help goes "up to a point". This awareness and acceptance of his own limits tells us of the depth of his respect for and trust in the freedom of others. His help reaches the point where the other person, in his or her freedom, sincerely wishes to let him- or herself be helped.

Spiritual help is help for freedom. It is therefore a support guided by discreet charity which, without abusing limits, knows how to find even those "desires of desires" on which grace acts. With this desire for desire, it is possible to help those practising the spiritual life to take a step forward with courage and boldness.

The book consists of spiritual reading cards. Fiorito writes: "We have transformed into a 'spiritual reading card' everything that has done us good in the authors we quote, to help, in some way, the practice of the 'month of exercises'".

What Fiorito calls a "spiritual reading card" is a literary genre all of its own, original. Fiorito often distributed cyclostyled pages printed with blue ink.

The subject matter of these pages had to fit on a horizontal sheet - sometimes almost without margins - so that the content could be read in a row. They were short, interesting and always practical writings. In them he adopted texts by other authors, using them freely, commenting on them, annotating them.

This 'conversion' of a rich and composite material into manageable reading sheets is the result of a long work of contemplation and discernment. What Ignatius calls "reflection in order to obtain fruit" from what has been contemplated and what has done us good, in Fiorito's hands is transformed into a fruit that has been ruminated on and distributed in rations, in view of what the reader can and must assimilate in each stage of his Exercises.

Therefore I warn the reader that this book should be read and used in the same dynamic and with the same spirit in which it was written. This is therefore of a "modular" book, an open book to "help" those who give and those who do the Exercises. Hence the importance of the indices and the text of the Exercises that enrich this edition by the publishing house *Ancora*, whom I thank, edited by the fathers of the magazine *La Civiltà Cattolica*.

The Master concludes his prologue by pointing out that his practical commentary will be of help to those who wish to practise the Exercises, not merely study them. The aim is to give oneself time to feel the promptings of the Spirit, and to seek God's will in practice through the "reform" of one's life.

In this regard, I think it is interesting to underline how the concept of "reform" - so much in vogue today - is being broadened and deepened. In the Exercises, reform is not only in tension with what was previously deformed. Reform is also about conforming to what is new, that is, to the life, style, criteria and choices of the Lord. Reform is not functional, nor is it self-perfected, but rather mission-oriented. If we look at the example of Saint Peter, we see that every time he confesses he is a sinner, the Lord immediately calls him to follow him, perfecting him not in everything, but in what is needed to be a fisher of men and to guide his sheep. The Lord will not ask Peter to reform all the faults he carries with him from his past life, but will invite him to go out of himself to proclaim the Gospel, a mission in which the past will be reformed in some respects and not so much in others.

According to the model of the Gospel, the focus and inner form of the Exercises, as Fiorito says, consist in the inner action of knowing - through discernment - "the divine will on the relevant issues of our spiritual life".