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Audience with a delegation of the “Scouts Unitaires de France”

Today, in the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father received in audience a delegation of the *Scouts Unitaires de France*, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the organisation.

The following is the Pope’s address to those present:

Address of the Holy Father

Bonjour!

I am delighted to meet you, members of the *Scouts Unitaires de France*, who are celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of your founding, and I warmly welcome you to Rome.

I thank the Council for the Pastoral Care of Children and Young People of the Conference of Bishops of France, as well as those of you who are responsible for this initiative which recognises you, young scouts, as agents of evangelisation and in the construction of society. I also thank you for your kind words of introduction. *Très poétique, très poétique! Cela que vous avez dit sur Saint Joseph: très bon!*

In society, we all too often see a degradation of human relations and a lack of reliable models for young people seeking formation. This situation is made even more precarious by the current health crisis, which has reduced the opportunities for meeting each other in order to fraternise and forge new friendships. In the face of all these difficulties, your scout movement is a sign of encouragement for young people, because it invites them to dream and to act, to have the courage to look to the future with hope. Indeed, through your pedagogy of the older brother and sister who protect and accompany the younger ones, patiently helping them to discover and make fruitful the talents received from the Lord, you show how "experiencing real human relationships, not just virtual relationships, is something that everyone needs, especially at an age when a person's character and personality are being formed" (*Urbi et Orbi Message*, 4 April 2021). And I am especially grateful to the couples who support you and who bear witness among you to the beauty of marriage.

The Scout, with his willingness to serve his neighbour, is also called to work for a more "outbound" Church and for a more human world. To this end, you have the noble mission of witnessing wherever you are that, with your faith and your commitment, you can enhance the richness of human relationships and make them a common good that helps social renewal. So I urge you to be both dynamic Christians and faithful scouts! And you will do so by trying to be consistent with the values you carry, by having strong convictions based on the Gospel, in a spirit of openness to others. Then your actions will benefit, in various ways, the society in which you live (cf. Encyclical Letter *Fratelli tutti*, 203).

Thanks to your relationship with nature, you carry the message that respect for others and for the environment go hand in hand and that therefore "we cannot presume to heal our relationship with nature and the environment without healing all fundamental human relationships" (*Laudato si'*, 119).

I invite you not to be discouraged by the selfishness of the world, not to withdraw into yourselves, not to be inactive young people, without ideals and without dreams. Never lose sight of the fact that the Lord is calling you all to fearlessly carry the missionary proclamation wherever you are, especially among young people, in your neighbourhoods, in sports, when you go out with friends, in voluntary work and at work. Always and everywhere share the joy of the Gospel that makes you live! The Lord wants you to be His disciples and to spread light and hope, because He counts on your boldness, your courage and your enthusiasm (cf. Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christus vivit*, 177).

Dear friends, once again I encourage you in your efforts to make Catholic Scouting a movement of sowers of hope and a rediscovery of community life. I thank God for your witness throughout these fifty years in the service of your brothers and sisters, and of the Church, which you support above all with your prayers.

I hope that this Jubilee will be an opportunity for each of you to renew your commitments, in accordance with the heritage received from those who have preceded you, in order to help young people to become free and responsible persons, respectful of others and of their environment.

I entrust the *Scouts Unitaires de France* to the maternal protection of the Virgin Mary. May she turn her merciful gaze upon each one of you and lead you to be faithful disciples of her Son. I bless you all, your families and the people who accompany you with their spiritual and material support. And I ask you, please, do not forget to pray for me. Thank you.
