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Audience with Members of the “Foi et Lumière international” Movement

This morning, in the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the members of the “Foi et Lumière international” Movement.

The following is his address to those present:

Address of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

I welcome you and I thank Mr. Raúl Izquierdo García for his words of introduction. You are celebrating your Jubilee: this is a good occasion of grace, for recognizing the gifts the Lord has granted you in these years on your journey, and for expressing your gratitude to Him. And at the same time, this Jubilee also becomes an opportunity to look to the future, to the task the Holy Spirit continues to entrust to you and to the fruits that the Church still expects from *Foi et Lumière*, for the vocation and mission it has received from the Lord.

Fifty years have passed since that pilgrimage to Lourdes, at Easter 1971, to which people with mental disabilities, their relatives and many friends were invited. From that moment, under the loving gaze of Mary, the experience of *Foi et Lumière* began. The Holy Spirit suggested the birth of something that no-one had predicted: your communities, in which you celebrate joy, reconciliation and reciprocal communion. In this way the light and the strength of the Risen Lord has given hope to many people who felt excluded and rejected, at times even in the Church.

From that moment on, the Holy Spirit accompanied the journey of your Movement and many “Faith and Light” communities were born in many countries throughout the five continents, bringing a message of love and

welcome. This message is the heart of the Gospel! It reminds us that every person, even and especially the smallest and the most fragile, is loved by God and has a place in the Church and in the world. It is the “gospel of littleness”, as Saint Paul reminds us when he writes to the Corinthians: “Consider your call, brethren; not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth; but God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong, God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God” (1 Cor 1:26-29).

The presence of *Foi et Lumière* was and is a prophecy, because often the most fragile people are discarded, considered useless. And your prophecy is even more important today, to combat the throwaway culture and to remind everyone that diversity is a wealth and must never become a reason for exclusion and discrimination.

These fifty years of the life of *Foi et Lumière* can be seen as a great pilgrimage, as an ideal continuation of the first pilgrimage. It is also an ecumenical journey, because people from different Christian denominations meet in your communities: Catholic, Protestant, Anglican, Orthodox... A sign of communion, a concrete seed of unity. It is precisely the most fragile people who become a source of reconciliation, because they call us all to a path of conversion.

The stretch of road you have travelled is long and rich in fruit, but still today in the Church and in the world there are so many who in their smallness and frailty are forgotten and excluded. I therefore encourage you to continue, with the strength of the Holy Spirit, your welcoming presence; may your communities always be places of encounter, of human promotion and of celebration for all those who still feel marginalised and abandoned. For the families who are experiencing the birth of a child with a disability, may you be a sign of hope, so that no one will be close themselves away in sadness and despair.

Within the Christian communities, I invite you to have the evangelical style of leaven: do not isolate and close yourselves, but participate in the life of the Church in the parishes and neighbourhoods, bring your experience and bear witness to God's choice for the least, the small, the excluded. May the spirit of communion and friendship, which is part of your charism, always make you instruments of reconciliation and peace, especially where there are conflicts and divisions.

The emblem that represents your experience, your “logo”, is a boat on a rough sea, as the sun rises from the clouds after the storm. During this pandemic, I have often recalled, thinking of the Gospel episode of the disciples in the storm, that we are all in the same boat; and so I confirm you in this commitment of yours: to be, in the storms that individuals and families experience, a small boat on which everyone can find a place, in the certainty that the Lord Jesus is on that same boat. May the sun of faith and hope, which rises from the clouds of our fears and insecurities, always accompany you on the journey that still awaits you. May the Lord bless you and may Our Lady keep you. And please, do not forget to pray for me. Thank you!
