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Audience with the participants in the Symposium “In the footsteps of Cardinal Suenens - The Holy Spirit, Mary and the Church”, promoted by the “Fiat” Association

This morning, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the participants in the Symposium “In the footsteps of Cardinal Suenens - The Holy Spirit, Mary and the Church”, promoted by the “Fiat” Association, to whom he addressed the following words:

Address of the Holy Father

Dear friends,

I welcome you to the Symposium you have organized on the figure of Cardinal Suenens. I thank Fr. Testaert for his kind words. I greet each one of you with affection and, through you, I express my spiritual closeness to all the members of your Association.

I join you in thanking the Lord for the work of Cardinal Suenens and Veronica O'Brien, work that continues today in your apostolate. In fidelity to the evangelical insights of your founders, you are committed to sharing the Gospel with every person whom Providence places in your path. Today the question of evangelization is at the heart of the mission of the Church. Today it is more explicit. Those two phrases of Pope Paul VI: the vocation of the Church is to evangelize; the joy of the Church is to evangelize (cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 14; 80). Always! More than ever, we are all required to be agents of an outgoing Church, under the impulse of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, “a Spirit-filled evangelization is one guided by the Holy Spirit, for he is the soul of the Church called to proclaim the Gospel” (Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 261).

The world is becoming ever more secularized. This continues at speed and we need disciples who are convinced in their profession of faith and capable of transmitting the flame of hope to the men and women of this time. The tragedies we experience in this moment, especially the war in the territory of Ukraine, so close to us, reminds us of the urgency of a civilization of love. In the eyes of our brothers and sisters, victims of the horrors of war, we read the profound and pressing need for a life marked by dignity, peace and love.

Like the Virgin Mary, we must continually cultivate the missionary spirit to draw close to those who suffer, opening our hearts to them. We must walk with them, fight with them for their human dignity and spread everywhere the scent of God's love. "With the Holy Spirit, Mary is always present in the midst of the people. She joined the disciples in praying for the coming of the Holy Spirit (*Acts* 1:14) and thus made possible the missionary outburst which took place at Pentecost. She is the Mother of the Church which evangelizes, and without her we could never truly understand the spirit of the new evangelization" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 284).

Our common home is being shaken by multiple crises. We must not be afraid of crises; crises purify us, they enable us to come out of them better. Without fear! For this reason, we need to build a humanity, a society of relationships that are fraternal and full of life. In reality, "actions have their source in a union increasingly directed towards others, considering them of value, worthy, pleasing and beautiful apart from their physical or moral appearances. Our love for others, for who they are, moves us to seek the best for their lives. Only by cultivating this way of relating to one another will we make possible a social friendship that excludes no-one and a fraternity that is open to all" (Encyclical Letter *Fratelli tutti*, 94). I therefore invite you to be witnesses, witnesses of God's mercy, tenderness and goodness.

Dear friends, the Church trusts in you. I urge you to give, by words, deeds and witness, a powerful message to our world, which is so poor in humanity. May you draw, with prayer and the mission itself, from the wellspring of goodness and truth, and find in communion with Christ, who died and rose again, the strength to see the world with a positive outlook, a look of love, a look of hope, a look of compassion and tenderness, with special attention towards the disadvantaged and marginalized.

I entrust every one of you participating in the Symposium and all the members of the Fiat Association to the Lord. I bless you and your families from my heart. And please, do not forget to pray for me. Thank you!

After the blessing (impromptu words):

I apologize for remaining seated to greet you, because this pain in my knee does not permit me to stand up for long. *Excusez-moi.*
