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Audience with a representation of readers of the weekly magazine “Famiglia Cristiana”

This morning, in the Paul VI Hall, the Holy Father Francis received in audience a representation of readers of the weekly magazine *Famiglia Cristiana*, on the occasion of the ninetieth anniversary of its birth.

The following is the Pope’s address to those attending the audience:

Address of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning and welcome!

I thank the editor, Don Stefano, for his presentation.

You represent today the great family of *Famiglia Cristiana*. It is not a play on words! Italy’s most popular Catholic magazine is 90 years old: like a good grandmother, who has seen a lot and acquired wisdom.

It all stems from the apostolic spirit of Blessed Fr. Giacomo Alberione: he imagined a magazine that would bring to families a Christian vision of reality, current affairs, the great themes of the world and the Church. And he involved the whole Pauline Family in this project: the priests in the direction and editing, the religious brothers especially in the technical phase of printing, the sisters for distribution in the homes, everyone to raise awareness in the parishes. But the collaboration immediately extends to journalists and experts in all fields.

Fr. Alberione was already telling young priests in 1915: “Sow good ideas so that they may bear good works: this is the work that matters. Religious ideas, social ideas, ideas of economy, ideas of virtue, ideas of hygiene, etc. [...]. When you know that an idea can do good, that a fact can make a newspaper interesting, it will be useful to communicate them: it is a talent that God gives: let it bear fruit” (*Appunti di Teologia Pastorale* [Notes on Pastoral Theology], no. 340).

Dear friends, the readers – that is, you – are the true asset of a magazine such as *Famiglia Cristiana*. And indeed the management, editorial staff and journalists have always nurtured contact with the people; a relationship that must be renewed even in the digital transformation we are going through. Fr. Alberione said: “Introduce the cinema in parishes and make subscriptions to Catholic magazines. The Catholic newspaper is like a visitation of God in the homes (*Prediche alle Pastorelle* [Sermons to the Pastorelle Sisters], Book VII, 1981, 318).

This has always been the main editorial approach of the Paulines: to be attentive to relationships as the key to communicative practice, and to “networks” as places for the collaborative creation of meanings and contents; to seek new forms of presence and action, linked not so much to means but rather to culture and the new grammar of communication; and to the service of all God’s people, especially the men and women who inhabit today’s peripheries. This approach is always valid, and naturally it must be updated according to the major directions of evangelization; today two roads open up before us in particular: the road of fraternity and the road of integral ecology. We must travel these roads, but the method remains the same: dialogue and listening, which enable relationships to be cultivated.

With regard to dialogue, it is important to understand that it cannot be reduced to an exchange of data or information, and that the relationship with another is not limited to a connection. You are well aware of this! One cannot confuse mere contact with a sign of dialogue and interaction, or a simple exchange of messages with true communication. Someone once said to me that the telephone directory is the book with the most data and the most characters, but without communication – curious! *Communication* is a more profound exercise, that *makes us come out of our self-centredness*. Overcoming self-centredness to look towards a broader horizon is indispensable in this moment of epoch change. To get to know the *interlocutors of this mission* and to come closer to them, the communicator must take an outbound path, if necessary changing attitude and mentality. This is the way that Vatican Council II showed us, and then Saint Paul VI and Saint John Paul II; but first of all, this is the example of the apostle Paul, who by communicating the Gospel created relationships and made communities.

The theme of the next General Chapter of the priests and brother disciples of the Society of Saint Paul clearly points in this direction: “*Let yourselves be transformed by renewing your way of thinking*” (Rom 12:2). *Called to be artisans of communion to prophetically announce the joy of the Gospel in the culture of communication*. You will begin precisely on World Communications Day, a day desired by Saint Paul VI, whose liturgical memorial falls on the same day. As we stand here together today, let us pray for this important moment for you Paulines; and let us pray that *Famiglia Cristiana* and your other periodicals, books, television, multimedia and training activities in Italy and around the world may always be renewed according to the Gospel with the zeal of the apostle Paul.

Always going to the Gospel, always going to the roots. And from there, taking strength for newness, the roots will give you the sap to grow, the Gospel will give you the mission and it will give you the message that constitutes you. But beware of a danger today: unfortunately, people confuse going deeper with going backwards. And a culture that, instead of going deep, goes backwards to announce, ends up preserving itself, not growing, not having the charism of communication. Be careful, in your magazines: always show the roots, but so as to grow. And be careful to see if there is any movement “backwards”, to denounce it and say: this is not Christian. The author of the Letter to the Hebrews said: “We are not among those who draw back” (cf. 10:39). Let us go forward with the power of the Gospel, with the communicative power that creates community; let us not go backwards to create small groups of self-preservation, which will end up turning our soul into a museum piece. Watch out for this.

And let us conclude with a word from Don Alberione, which summarizes his charismatic journey: “No greater riches can be given to this poor and proud world than Jesus Christ - he is the greatest wealth. Mary gave the world grace in Jesus Christ; she continues to offer it throughout the centuries. [...] The world needs Jesus Christ, Way, Truth and Life. Mary gives it through the apostles and apostolates, whom she raises, forms, assists and crowns with fruit and glory in heaven” (*Abundantes divitiae gratiae suae*, 1953, p. 108).

Thank you all for coming! I bless you from my heart, and I bless all the men and women readers of *Famiglia Cristiana*, and all those who work to write, print and distribute it. And do not forget to pray for me. Thank you!
