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Audience with the participants in the General Chapters of the Poor Servants of Divine Providence (Don Calabria).

This morning, in the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the participants in the General Chapters of the Poor Servants of Divine Providence (Don Calabria).

The following is his address to those in attendance:

Address of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning and welcome!

I am glad to meet you on the occasion of your General Chapters. I address my warm greeting to every one of you. To the Superior General [of the PSDP] – whom I thank for his words – and the Superior General [of the PSDP Sisters], with their respective councils, I wish a serene and fruitful service.

You have concluded your work in the Chapters, on the theme: *The prophecy of communion*. And it seems to me that you wanted to put it into practice already in the context of these days. Our communion is born and nourished first of all in the relationship with God the Trinity - we have meditated on it with the texts of Saint John during this Easter season - and then it is concretely manifested in fraternity, in the spirit of family, which is also typical of your charism, and in the synodal style that you have embraced in full harmony with the journey of the entire Church. Thank you for this, it is courageous, thank you! It is nice to see the two religious Congregations together, with the presence of some lay people who actively participated in the Chapters, strengthening their identity and belonging. This too is prophecy of communion.

According to your charism, you are called to revive in the world faith in *God the Father* and filial abandonment to his *providence*. This is beautiful! When we contemplate Jesus in his public life, in his preaching, even in his conversations with his disciples, we see that in his heart there was this desire in first place: to make the Father

known, to make his goodness felt. This is how Jesus lived, fully immersed in the Father's will, and his entire mission was aimed at bringing us into this filial relationship, whose essential characteristic is trust in Providence: that the Father knows us better than we know ourselves and knows better than we know what we need. Well, you have been "fascinated" by this essential dimension of the mystery of Christ. Following in the footsteps of Saint Giovanni Calabria, you have chosen to make it your own and to bear witness to it, and you want to do so especially in the company of the poorest, the last, the discarded of society, who are your "pearls", as he, your Founder, called them.

Don Calabria, like all saints, was a prophet. He has left you a great legacy and you must treasure it. The journey you have taken and are taking is none other than a reinterpretation today of the path that God indicated to him: a man integrated in the Church of his time, who knew how to respond to needs by going to the peripheries, to manifest the paternal and maternal face of God. Reinterpret it with creative fidelity, seeking new paths so that the "dream of God" might be fulfilled in your religious communities. Return to it and reread it.

I would say that cultivating trust in divine providence together with the poor makes you artisans of a "culture of providence". This is very important! We must not lose this dimension, this culture of providence, which I see as an antidote to the culture of indifference, unfortunately widespread in societies of so-called "wellbeing". In fact, the Christian spirituality of providence is not fatalism, it does not mean waiting for solutions to problems and the goods we need to rain down from heaven. No. On the contrary, it means trying to resemble, in the Holy Spirit, our heavenly Father in taking care of his creatures, especially the frailest, smallest ones; it means sharing with others the little we have so that no one lacks what is necessary. It is the attitude of care, more necessary than ever to counter that of indifference.

I would like to emphasize again the aspect of *sharing*, because it seems to me to be an essential part of the "prophecy of communion" on the basis of which you wish to journey together. And I do so by recalling the example given to us by our elders, our grandparents. For them, when a guest came to the house unexpectedly, or when a poor person came knocking for help, it was normal to share a plate of soup, or polenta. This was a very concrete way of experiencing Providence, as sharing. We must not idealize that world, nor take refuge in sterile nostalgia, but we must recover certain values: the mentality of those who break bread while blessing God the Father, trusting that that bread will be enough for us and for our neighbour in need. This is how Jesus Christ taught us in the miracle of sharing - not multiplying - the loaves and fishes. Today we need Christians who serve Providence by practising sharing. And to do this openly and sincerely, not like Ananias and Sapphira (cf. *Acts of the Apostles* 5:1-11), no: openly.

Dear brothers and sisters, may Saint Giovanni Calabria, by his example and his intercession, guide you on this path. And I urge you, do not withdraw into yourselves, in self-referentiality. Try to open yourselves more and more to receive the newness and the style that God has inspired and dreams of for you. May the synodal and fraternal mentality infuse the service of the authority of your Congregations and of the entire Calabrian family.

The geographical and existential peripheries to which the Lord sends you are the field where you announce the providential love of the Father through superabundant mercy, manifesting the tenderness of the face of God, without prejudice and exclusion. Love the poor by making yourselves poor.

I encourage you to value the richness of the different vocations you have within your family: men religious, women religious and lay people, in the communion of differences and living the one baptismal vocation with radicality and enthusiasm.

May you feel that you are bearers of a charism that is a gift for the Church, and that grows to the extent that you live it and share it. This gives you joy: give your witness with simplicity, with humility but with courage, without mediocrity; and above all I would say with a great sense of humanity. There is so much need, of humanity! And also, among you, in your communities. I find that a very bad thing, in communities, is when this dimension of humanity is missing. And one of the things that destroys this human communion, of humanity, is gossip: please be careful. Never gossip about each other. If you have a problem with a sister or brother, go and tell them to their face. And if you can't tell them to their face, swallow it. But don't go sowing unease, that hurts and destroys.

Gossip is a deadly poison. And so often it is fashionable in communities. No, with you it is sure not to happen! But I say this so that you will be careful. It would be good if from this Chapter there were in each of you the determination never to gossip about the other, never. If I have a problem, I say it openly. "No, you can't because it's a bit neurotic, a bit neurotic...". Then tell the superior or the superior, who can remedy it, but don't go sowing disquiet that causes harm. Let it be a good resolution: no chatter.

I thank you for coming and wish you a good journey: to be a prophecy of communion by bearing witness to the Gospel of Providence, in sharing with the poorest, opposing the culture of rejection and indifference. May Our Lady, who is the quintessential poor servant of God's providence, accompany and protect you. I bless you from my heart. Please, I ask you to pray for me, for I too am in need. Thank you.

[*Blessing*].

See the cover of this booklet. This painting is beautiful. Gossip destroys people's identity. Therefore, no gossiping!
