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Audience with Salesian pilgrims gathered for the canonization of Artemide Zatti

This morning, in the Paul VI Hall, the Holy Father Francis received in audience a group of Salesian pilgrims gathered for the canonization of Blessed Artemide Zatti.

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

Address of the Holy Father

Dear Salesian brothers and sisters, good morning and welcome!

I thank the Major Rector for his presentation, and I greet the members of the General Council, the Salesian cardinals and bishops – there are many of them! I am pleased to welcome the pilgrims from Boretto, the birthplace of Artemide Zatti, and those from Argentina and the Philippines; I greet the members of the Salesian family from numerous countries throughout the world, and in particular the especially the Salesian coadjutors. And a special greeting to the person who received the grace of healing through the intercession of the Blessed, whom I will have the joy of canonizing tomorrow. I would like to recall him from four perspectives.

Firstly, as a *migrant*. The Salesians arrived in Argentina in 1875 and initially carried out their apostolate, in Buenos Aires. In Buenos Aires they did not go to the most important areas, they went to Boca, where there were communists, socialists, where they eat priests alive! The Salesians went there, and other places, especially in support of Italian emigrants. Artemide got to know the Salesians in Bahía Blanca, where he and his family had come from Italy in 1897. Unfortunately, many migrants lost the values of faith, all absorbed in work and the problems they encountered. But the Zatti family, thanks be to God, were an exception. They never failed to participate in the life of the Christian community, maintain cordial relations with the priests, pray together at home, and partake of the sacraments. Artemide grew up in an excellent Christian environment and, thanks to the guidance of Fr. Carlo Cavalli, developed his choice of Salesian life.

A second aspect: his “kinship”: he was “*kin to all the poor*”, this was Zatti’s kinship. The tuberculosis that afflicted

him at the age of twenty seemed to crush all his dreams, but thanks to the recovery obtained through the intercession of Mary Help of Christians, Artemis dedicated his entire life to the sick, especially the poorest, the abandoned and the discarded. The hospitals of San José and Sant'Isidro were a precious and unique health resource for caring especially for the poor of Viedma and the Rio Negro region: Zatti's heroism made them places where God's love irradiated, where health care became an experience of salvation. In that patch of Patagonian land, where our Blessed led his life, a page of the Gospel was rewritten: the Good Samaritan found in him heart, hands and passion, above all for the little ones, the poor, the sinners, the last. Thus, a hospital has become the "Inn of the Father", a sign of a Church that endeavours to be rich in gifts of humanity and Grace, a dwelling place for the commandment of love of God and brother, a place of health as a pledge of salvation. It is also true that this enters into the Salesian vocation: the Salesians are the great educators of the heart, of love, of affections, of social life; great educators of the heart.

The hospital and the houses of the poor, visited night and day getting round by bicycle, were the frontiers of his mission. He lived full self-giving to God and the consecration of all his efforts for the good of his neighbour. His intense work and tireless availability for the needs of the poor were inspired by a profound union with the Lord: constant prayer, prolonged Eucharistic adoration, praying the Rosary. Artemide was a man of communion, who know how to work with others: religious sisters, doctors, nurses; and with his example and his counsel he formed people, shaped consciences, converted hearts.

Thirdly, we see him as a Salesian *coadjutor*. Let us recall the beautiful witness he bore in 1915 in Viedma, on the occasion of the inauguration of a monument in memory of Father Evasio Garrone, a Salesian missionary considered a distinguished benefactor by Artemis. On that occasion he made the following statement: "If I am well, healthy and in a position to do some good to my sick neighbour, I owe it to Father Garrone, doctor, who, seeing my health worsening day by day, as I was suffering from tuberculosis with frequent haemoptysis, told me decisively that, if I did not want to end up like many others, I should make a promise to Mary Help of Christians to always remain at her side, helping her in the care of the sick, that he, trusting in Mary, would cure me. I BELIEVED, because I knew by reputation that Mary Help of Christians helped him in a visible way. PROMISED, because it was always my desire to be of help in something to my neighbour. And, God having listened to his servant, HEALED. I believed, I promised, I was healed. Three words written there.

This recovered life was no longer his property: he felt that it was all for the poor. The three verbs "believed, promised, healed" express the blessing and consolation that touched Artemide's life. He lived this mission in communion with his Salesian confreres: he was the first to be present at community events, and he inspired the fraternity with his joy and good nature.

The fourth and final trait I would like to highlight: he is an *intercessor for vocations*. And I have experienced this. I will tell you about a personal experience. When I was provincial of the Jesuits of Argentina, I knew the story of Artemide Zatti, read his biography and entrusted to him the request to the Lord for holy vocations to the lay consecrated life for the Society of Jesus. Since we began to pray through his intercession, the number of young coadjutors increased significantly; and they were persevering and very committed. And so I bore witness to this grace we received.

And in this regard, I wish to underline the importance of the vocation of the brothers. I saw it in the Society of Jesus and I know that the same can be said of the Salesians. The brothers have a special charism that is nurtured in prayer and in work. And they do good to the entire body of the Congregation. They are people of piety, they are joyful, workers. We see no "inferiority complex" in the, no, they are mature, they are not troubled by the fact that they are not priests, and they do not aspire to become deacons, no, brothers; they do not want promotions; brothers, because all the richness is there. They are aware of their vocation and this is how they want it to be (cf. *Letter to Don Cayetano Bruno*, 1986).

To you, dear brother coadjutors, thank you, thank you! May you too always be grateful for the gift of this call, which gives a special witness of consecrated life, and thus propose it to young people as a form of evangelical life at the service of the little ones and the poor.

Thank you all, brothers and sisters, for coming to celebrate the canonization of Artemide Zatti. I bless you from my heart, as well as those who could not come because of age or health conditions, or pocket money! I bless everyone. And I ask you to please pray for me. Thank you.
