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Audience with a group of entrepreneurs from Spain

This morning, in the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience a group of entrepreneurs from Spain.

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

Address of the Holy Father

I cordially greet you, dear brothers and sisters, members of the Spanish Confederation of Young Entrepreneurs' Associations (*Confederación Española de Asociaciones de Jóvenes Empresarios*) and of the Galician Confederation of Entrepreneurs (*Confederación de Empresarios de Galicia*) - you are all young, I see, which is a very good thing - and I thank you for the kind words you addressed to me. Your presence here is a sign of hope.

We are living in a time of notorious economic and social imbalances. The Second Vatican Council had already affirmed that "extravagance and wretchedness exist side by side. While a few enjoy a very great power of choice, the majority are deprived of almost all possibility of acting on their own initiative and responsibility, and often subsist in living and working conditions unworthy of the human person" (Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, 63). In this context, it is urgent to propose a suitable economy to contribute to solving the great problems we are experiencing on a global level.

I would like to share three ideas with you, that seem to me to be pertinent to your journey as entrepreneurs. Firstly, there is prophecy. What did you say, Father, what did you say? Prophecy? What does prophecy have to do with business? I will show you. In the Bible, the prophet is the one who speaks in the name of God, who transmits his message, and through which he fosters a change in his environment. For example, Amos, the prophet of "justice", as early as the seventh century B.C., denounced the lust for luxury and enrichment of the powerful among the people of Israel, which benefited only a powerful sector, while the great majority of the people were oppressed, hungry and in need. In a context as complex as the present one, characterized by war and environmental crisis, it is up to you to perform your service, let us say, as prophets who proclaim and build

up the common home, respecting all forms of life, caring for the good of all and promoting peace. Without prophecy, the economy, and in general all human action, is blind. Because it is rooted in itself, isn't it? When it does not sicken and transform into finance - and when the economy turns into finance, everything becomes liquid or gaseous and ends up like the chain of Saint Anthony, where you don't know how much is here, *how much is there*, because you cannot touch it and it's all gaseous. One day, while chatting with me, a world financial leader told me that she had tried - she held a very high position - to bring together economics, humanism and religion, and that it had worked well. She tried to do the same with finance, humanism and religion, and could not find a way. That makes us think a lot, doesn't it?

The second aspect refers to *care for the relationship with God*. Firstly prophecy, secondly, care for the relationship with God. Just as the earth, when it is well cultivated and cared for, bears abundant fruits, so it is with us; when we cultivate spiritual health, when we have a well cared-for relationship with the Lord, we begin to give very good fruits. The prophet Amos emphasized: "Seek the Lord, that you may live ... seek good and not evil ... then the Lord ... will be with you (5, 6 and 14). The heroism the world needs from you today can be sustainable only if there are strong roots. Ask yourselves: how are my roots? This does not mean going backwards, no. Roots so as to be able to grow better. Let there be harmony between the roots, the trunk and the fruits. Economic conversion will be possible when we live a conversion of the heart; when we are able to think more of those in need; when we learn to put the common good before the individual good; when we understand that the famine of love and justice in our relationships is the consequence of a lack of attention to our relationship with the Creator, and that this has repercussions on our common home. Then, and perhaps only then, will we be able to reverse the detrimental actions that are preparing a sad future for the new generations. Remember that cultivating the relationship with the Lord makes it possible to have strong roots that will sustain the projects you wish to undertake.

The third thought I will share with you relates to *work and poverty*. Saint Francis of Assisi bore important witness to these; not only did he carry out the restoration of the Chapel of San Damiano, but he also, and above all, contributed to restoring the Church of his time. In particular, he did so with the love he felt for the poor and with his austere way of life. With the values of work and with poverty, which implies total trust in God and not in material things, an economy can be created that reconciles all the members of the various phases of production with each other, without mutual contempt, without creating greater injustice or cold indifference. On the other hand, this does not mean that one loves poverty, which must be combated, and to that end you have good tools, such as the possibility of creating jobs, and thus contributing to giving dignity to your fellow human beings. For it is through work that the Lord "raises the needy from the dust, lifts the poor from the ash heap" (*Ps 113:7*). So here we have a remedy to combat the disease of poverty: work and love for the poor. Be creative in planning your work, be creative and that will give you much more strength.

I encourage you to continue creatively to transform the face of the economy, so that it may be more attentive to ethical principles (cf. Encyclical Letter *Laudato si'*), and not forget that its activity is in the service of the human being, not only the few, but all, especially the poor. Furthermore, it is important to be aware that it is not above nature, but must take care of it, because the future generations depend on this. Your business must somehow take care not to pollute nature further; on the contrary, it must open up pathways for recovery. One of the great European scientists, in a meeting I had with him six months ago, said: "Yesterday my granddaughter was born, and I thought, poor thing, if things continue like this, within thirty years she will have to live in an uninhabitable world". It is still in our hands to change this tendency to pollute, which is *destroying* everything.

I would like to conclude my message by entrusting you to the protection of the Most Holy Virgin and Saint Joseph. They knew how to care for the family and the home, with the hearts of parents. May they intercede for you, so that the Lord may grant you too a maternal and paternal love to protect the human family, to take care of it, to take care of the common home. This is a virtue we do not speak about much in economics lessons – beware! One of your main functions is to *take care*, to take care of your own, to take care of your company, to take care of your employees, to take care of the common home, to take care of everything, no? The good economist, the good entrepreneur takes care. God bless you. May the Virgin keep you! And do not forget to pray for me, I am in need. Thank you.

