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Audience with members of the “Pro Petri Sede” Association

Today, in the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the members of the “Pro Petri Sede” Association.

The following is the Pope’s greeting to those present:

Greeting of the Holy Father

Dear friends, good morning and welcome!

I thank the Chaplain General for his words and I am happy to welcome you all again, dear members of the *Pro Petri Sede* Association, on the occasion of your biennial pilgrimage to Rome. You have come to be spiritually refreshed at the tomb of Saint Peter and to draw from the living wellsprings of the Church the love of Christ who gives himself unceasingly for us. May the witness of the Apostle, so human and so full of God's grace, awaken in you the generous and missionary zeal of the early Church.

The pilgrimage is also a time for you to bring your generous offerings to support the pastoral solicitude of the Pope and the charitable works of the Holy See throughout the world. You still bear witness today to the generosity and charity that stirred the hearts of your predecessors, who were not afraid to spend their lives for love of the Church. Today, the call to give yourselves for love of our brothers and sisters is no less urgent: so many of them suffer from war, violence, exclusion, material and spiritual poverty. And it is significant that your pilgrimage coincides with the beginning of Lent, a propitious time that calls us to convert from the slavery of selfishness to the freedom to love and serve God and our brothers and sisters.

Reading the Acts of the Apostles, we see how in the nascent Church the generosity of Christians manifested itself among themselves and towards the community with great solidarity. They were able to pool everything to support their more fragile brothers and sisters. They understood that they were the temporary stewards of their goods: indeed, everything we possess is a gift from God and we must allow ourselves to be enlightened by Him

in the management of the goods we receive. His spirit, the source of generosity, will always urge us to give to those in need, to fight poverty with what He gives us. For the Lord gives us in abundance so that we in turn can give ourselves.

Dear brothers and sisters, let us put into practice the call to do good to all, taking the time to love the smallest and most defenceless, the abandoned and despised, those who are discriminated against and marginalized.

Dear friends, I wish to express my gratitude for your faithful support of my ministry as Successor of Peter, and I thank you in particular for the gift of the portrait that one of your members was kind enough to make and offer me. I commend each one of you and your families, as well as all the members of your Association, to the intercession of the Virgin Mary and St Peter, and I bless you from my heart. And please do not forget to pray for me. Thank you.
