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Audience with participants in the General Chapter of the Servants of the Paraclete

This morning, the Holy Father Francis received in audience, in the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the participants in the General Chapter of the Servants of the Paraclete, to whom he delivered the following address:

Address of the Holy Father

Dear brothers, good morning and welcome!

I am meeting with you at this significant moment for your Congregation, which is the General Chapter, a strong time of dialogue between you and the Holy Spirit, from which one emerges renewed, first and foremost in the heart, in outlook and in intentions, and then in initiatives and structures. A time of collegial discernment of the signs that come to you from your journey and from your history.

Inspired, then, by the grace proper to the Chapter, I propose to you to find new paths of mercy and proximity to realize your charism with dynamic fidelity. It places you beside priests in difficulty, as your Constitution says, to “render every possible and prudent service to those who have received the sacrament of the Order” (*Constitution*, 4:2). The motto of your Institute – *Pro Christo sacerdote* (cf. *ivi*. 4:4), summarizes well your peculiar vocation: you are placed at the service of Christ in his priests.

At the current moment, this also means sharing the particular journey of purification that the Church is experiencing due to the tragedy of abuse. “Sin disfigures, and we have a painful, humiliating experience of it when we ourselves or one of our brother priests or bishops falls into the bottomless pit of vice, of corruption, or even worse, of crimes that ruin the lives of others” (*Meeting with the priests of the diocese of Rome*, 7 March 2019). In a situation like this, being “servants of the Paraclete” asks you to dedicate your life to accompanying some brother priests or consecrated brothers, offering to each one a path of asceticism, conversion and spiritual and vocational renewal.

With the spirit and style of the good Samaritan, you place yourselves beside these confrères, sharing life and

daily prayer with them. You integrate them, above all, in a community, a prayerful community, that helps to rediscover the harmony of life that a vocational crisis always compromises.

While you confront the many facets of this problem, I invite you to study more deeply the *spirituality of reparation* (cf. *Address to the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors*, 5 May 2023), starting from the need for purification, in service to the holiness of the Pastors of the People of God.

Your charism particularly emphasizes ascetic commitment and prayer, with a contemplative disposition, which you rightly feel the duty to assume once again in fullness. Together with the priests you accompany, you are called to rediscover the primacy of the spiritual life, aware that priestly maturity is fulfilled when the Holy Spirit becomes the protagonist of the life of ordained ministers (cf. *Homily at the Chrism Mass*, 6 April 2023). Indeed, the spiritual life of a priest grows “once we are no longer concerned to save appearances and make quick fixes, but leave the initiative to the Spirit” (*ibid.*). Leave the initiative to the Spirit: it is He who brings about conversion and harmony in the life of a priest. Doubts are not to be tolerated but brought to light, to the light of the Spirit. He alone heals us from unfaithfulness (cf. *Hos 14:5*). He alone, not other methods. What heals us from unfaithfulness is the Holy Spirit.

In the service, silent and unseen, that you are called to carry out every day, you can be the image of Jesus Christ, *face of the Father's mercy* (Bull *Misericordiae vultus*, 11 April 2015, 1), that reveals to us the mystery of divine love in its fullness. As the Apostle Paul reminds us, “God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us” (*Rm 5:8*). May the Spirit help you look at everyone with Jesus' eyes, with his love, with his tenderness.

Dear brothers, thank you for coming, and I wish you a good journey as witnesses of the Gospel of mercy. May the Virgin Mary accompany you and protect you: look to her to “believe once again in the revolutionary nature of love and tenderness” (Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, 288). I bless you from my heart. And please, do not forget to pray for me. Thank you.
