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Audience with members of the “Família da Esperança” Association

This morning, in the San Damaso Courtyard of the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis met with members of the *Família da Esperança* Association, to whom he delivered the following address:

Address of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning and welcome!

I thank you from the heart for your visit. This year you celebrate with joy and gratitude the forty years since you received your specific charism, that is, the adventure of presenting the Risen Lord, the origin and purpose of our hope, to those who are in need. And your charism is so beautiful: the *charism of hope!* You must never abandon this *vocation to hope!* The humblest of the theological virtues, but the most daily one, and the strongest.

In the Gospel according to Matthew, Jesus presents Himself to us in this way: “I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me” (25:35-36). With these words, the Lord identifies Himself with our poorest, neediest, most suffering brothers and sisters. Around forty years ago, your charism was born from a request for help from a young man who wanted to free himself from drug addiction: in him, and in all those who came after him, you recognized Christ who said to you: I am a slave to drugs and you welcomed me, to bring me hope again and to make me understand that a new life is possible. God’s call to you, to bring hope to those who perhaps no longer find meaning in their life, is a call to love Him unconditionally in people who find themselves in situations of social vulnerability.

One of the great problems of today’s world is indifference, the seduction of indifference, as I recalled in the Encyclical *Fratelli tutti*. Instead, you have not remained indifferent in the face of the pain you have seen on the face of so many young people, afflicted by existential sufferings, especially those whose life was destroyed by drugs and other addictions. You became “neighbours”, or rather “brothers” to many people you picked up from the streets and, as in the parable of the Good Samaritan, you accompanied them so as to treat them, heal them

and help them regain their dignity.

You are well aware that bringing hope means not only helping to conquer vices, to overcome trauma, to rediscover a place in the family and in society. Let us remember the words of Pope Benedict XVI, when he visited you in Guaratinguetá, in 2007: "Reintegration in society undoubtedly demonstrates the effectiveness of your initiative. Yet it is the conversions, the rediscovery of God and active participation in the life of the Church which attract even greater attention and which confirm the importance of your work". May your *charism of hope*, as a gift inspired in your midst by the Holy Spirit, lead you to take care of people in their entirety, material and spiritual, body and soul.

This charism is entrusted to all of you. The founders were providential instruments for this gift to take shape, to consolidate, to find its place in the Church and to reach so many people. After forty years, faithful to the original inspiration, new people are called to take on the responsibility of preserving and making fruitful this spiritual heritage that the Lord has entrusted to you. Do not be afraid of this new phase. Live it with humility and confidence, and by preserving the spiritual communion among yourselves. And the Lord, who began this journey with you, will stay with you and lead you to the end.

I am grateful to God and to you for your witness in the various works of your association, such as the *Fazendas da Esperança*, scattered throughout Brazil and, since 1998, present also in other countries. And I am also very thankful for the work you do with priests, seminarians, and men and women religious, helping them to overcome the challenges and problems of a psychological nature that can affect some people consecrated to God. Keep going with this good work, which is so necessary to the Church!

Dear friends, I wish you all the best on your journey on the path of hope. May the Virgin Mary accompany you. I wholeheartedly bless your great Family and your mission. And I ask you, please, to pray for me. Thank you!
