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Audience with a delegation from the “Sentinels of the Holy Family”

This morning, in the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience a delegation from the “Sentinels of the Holy Family”.

The following is the address delivered by the Pope to the participants during the meeting:

Address of the Holy Father

Ladies, dear Sentinels, good morning!

With joy I welcome you, *Sentinelles de la Sainte Famille*, and greet Her Royal Highness Princess Sybil of Luxembourg.

Yours is a Marian prayer network - praying with Our Lady is beautiful - founded ten years ago, whose vocation is to present the intentions of the Church and the world to our Holy Mother. I appreciate the simplicity and humility of your movement, which arose spontaneously in the common prayer of the first among you. The commitment required of one who wants to become a “sentinel” is simple, it might even seem laughable: recite a decade of the Rosary every day. Very simple. It is small in the eyes of men, but it is much in the eyes of God, if it is done faithfully over time, with faith and in a spirit of communion among you. God loves what is small and makes it bear fruit.

The fact that your movement is made up only of women sheds light on your specific and irreplaceable vocation in the Church, in the image of the Virgin Mary. You not only pray to Our Lady, asking her to intercede, but you are moreover disposed to conform yourselves to her, to her motherhood, to unite yourselves to her prayer of intercession as a mother for all the children of the Church and for the world. Thus, whatever your state in life, with Mary you are all mothers. Your prayer and your commitment as “sentinels” are oriented according to the model of Mary, with certain characteristics.

I think first of all of the *gaze* you cast on others and on the realities of the world. May it always be like that of the Virgin Mary, a mother's gaze, patient, understanding, compassionate. And I invite you to imbue your whole life and all your relationships with this gaze, not only when you find yourselves together as "sentinels" and in moments of prayer, but in your daily life, in the family, in the parish, in your workplace.

Moreover, we have also heard recently in the liturgy that Mary *kept and pondered events in her heart*. You certainly bring to your prayers events that may be painful, personally or entrusted to you by others. You also bring the intentions of the world, ravaged by so many conflicts, so much violence and so much indifference; and also those of many people who are suffering, abandoned, rejected or in great difficulty. All this may provoke incomprehension, discouragement. But Mary, seeing the child Jesus suffer poverty, does not become discouraged; she does not complain. She remains silent; she keeps her heart and meditates (cf. *Homily*, 1 January 2022). " That is what mothers do: they know how to overcome obstacles and disagreements, and to instill peace. In this way, they transform problems into opportunities for rebirth and growth" (*ibid.*). I wish you all the best in helping people to discover the meaning of what they live, and always to keep hope and trust in the future.

Finally, *tenderness*. Our world, as well as our brothers and sisters, need tenderness more than ever: a word that some would perhaps like to remove from the dictionary! (cf. *Homily*, 1 January 2019). How harsh the world is sometimes today, implacable, deaf and indifferent to the suffering and needs of our neighbour. Mary was tenderness for Jesus; and she is tenderness for the Church and the world. This is certainly also the vocation of a "sentinel": to incarnate in some way Mary's tenderness for the Church and the world.

I thank you once again for your visit and for your devotion. I wish for you to persevere courageously. May your growth, numerical and geographical, not make you lose your simplicity and smallness of heart. I bless you, and I ask you not to forget me in your prayers. Thank you.
