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Audience with participants in the General Chapters of the Hospitaller Sisters of the Sacred Heart and the Daughters of Saint Camillus

This morning, in the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the participants in the General Chapters of the Hospitaller Sisters of the Sacred Heart and the Daughters of Saint Camillus, to whom he delivered the following address:

Address of the Holy Father

This time is the time of the Chapters, until July, and so we have to do two together because there isn't time, there are so many... But onwards, take courage!

I am pleased to welcome you on the occasion of your General Chapters. This is a moment of grace: for you, for the sisters you represent, and for the entire Church.

It is a beautiful turn of Providence to have you meet here, with the Bishop of Rome, to give thanks to the Lord, to ask Him for light to discern His will, and to renew your commitment to the service of the Church.

At the beginning of your journeys there are two exciting stories, in which we can see how the audacity of founders and foundresses, under the action of the Holy Spirit, can achieve great works, launching themselves where charity calls, without making too many calculations, with the "holy madness of love". And if love is missing, we are finished!

This is the case of Maria Angustias Gimenez, the Venerable Maria Josefa Recio and Saint Benedict Menni, who in 1881, inspired by the charism of Saint John of God, in a Spain troubled by difficulties and divisions, began a pioneering work for those times, at the service of the last among the last: the mentally ill. This is a beautiful thing, without the pursuit of human gain. Thus, the Hospitaller Sisters of the Sacred Heart were born. And since then, you have continued their mission, extending assistance to ever new forms of suffering and poverty, to make

God's mercy present in the practice of hospitality, with a special focus on the recovery and integral rehabilitation of people. And you do this by trying to involve everyone - the sick, families, doctors, sisters, volunteers and others - in a "community" atmosphere in which everyone shares and contributes to the good of others. This is beautiful, because in this way everyone heals together, each according to their need and the wounds they bear. Let us never forget this, please: we all need healing, everyone, and caring for others is good for us.

Not many years after the foundation of the Sisters Hospitallers, in 1892, in Rome, another woman, Saint Josephine Vannini, inspired this time by Saint Camillus de Lellis, together with Blessed Luigi Tezza - who was buried in Buenos Aires, I visited his tomb -, gave life to the Congregation of the Daughters of Saint Camillus, also dedicated to caring for the sick. I had hospital stays with them, when I had my operations. This woman knew well what pain is: in her life she had suffered so much due to poor health and for many other reasons. Only with the help of God and good people had she been able to cope, and therefore she loved to repeat: "Suffering is only overcome by love". Thus, He entrusted the sick to your love, the first and indispensable medicine of every place of care; indeed, with the fourth vow of care for the sick, He placed them at the heart of your consecration. A priest who had stayed in hospital with you said to me: "These nuns believe, they believe!".

Dear sisters, all this is a sign, it is an invitation, in the discernment of your Chapters, not to be afraid, to let yourselves be driven by the same boldness of your foundresses and founders, to dare, to risk – dare, risk! – for the good of the brothers and sisters whom God places on your way. Dare, without fear, and let yourselves be challenged by the new poverties of our time: there are so many of them! In this way, you will put to good use the great and rich legacy that has been handed down to you, and you will keep it always alive and young.

Thank you! Thank you for your work. Please, do not lose your joy, do not lose the smile and the joy of the heart. I bless you from my heart. And please, I ask you to pray for me. Thank you.
