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Audience with members of the Circolo San Pietro

This morning the Holy Father Francis received in audience, in the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the members of the *Circolo San Pietro*, to whom he addressed the following words of greeting:

Greeting of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters of the *Circolo San Pietro*, good morning and welcome!

I always like to meet you because the audience with you is in the spirit of *gratitude*, which is the beautiful “flavour” of life. When I welcome the *Circolo San Pietro*, I feel gratitude for the service you provide for the poor of Rome. And I know that you do so in the name of the Pope, in the name of the Holy Mother Church. And, please, convey my greeting to your President, who is not well. I wish him a speedy recovery; greet him on my behalf.

What you do in the name of the Church is also documented in the book you have produced, and which you have given me today: a collection of all the Popes’ teachings to the *Circolo San Pietro*, throughout the 155 years of its history. And, thank you therefore for this work too, which is important for the *memory of roots*. Roots are fundamental: without roots there is no life, there is no future. The flourishing of the leaves is linked to the good health of the roots. Therefore, I praise this work and I thank you.

But I also want to say to you: be careful not to “musealize” your history, not to “sterilize” the roots! The memory is the organ of the future, provided that the roots remain alive and well. Therefore, I encourage you to *transmit your heritage of values and experiences to the young*. We need young people who move forward. How beautiful it is to think of a grandfather of the *Circolo San Pietro* who transmits his experience to his grandson! There are many here, this is good. Think how much wealth of lived faith, of concrete charity, of love for the poor, can pass through the example of an elderly person. And think how much energy, how much creativity, how much impetus a young person can give.

I am reminded of Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati - soon to be a saint - who went to the homes of the poor in Turin

to bring help. Pier Giorgio was from a wealthy, upper-middle class family, but he did not grow up “wrapped in cotton wool”, he did not lose himself in the “good life”, because within him there was the lifeblood of the Holy Spirit, there was love for Jesus and for his brothers.

I would like to share one last thing with you. Next year will be the Holy Year. Rome is full of building sites; good, we need these too. But the “building site” that cannot be overlooked is that of charity! The pilgrims and tourists who come to Rome should “breathe” the air of Christian charity, which is not only assistance; it is care for dignity, it is closeness, it is lived sharing, without advertising, without spotlights. With your presence, with your vicinity, compassion and tenderness, you too prepare the city for the Jubilee, taking care not only of the streets and infrastructures, but of the hearts and flesh of the poor, who, as Saint Lawrence said, are the treasure of the Church.

Dear sisters and dear brothers, thank you for coming! I entrust you to the protection of the *Salus Populi Romani*, and I bless all of you and your families. Please, do not forget to pray for me – pray in favour, you understand! Thank you.
