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Audience with directors and employees of the “Terna” Group

This morning, in the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the directors and employees of the “Terna” Group, to whom he delivered the following address:

Address of the Holy Father

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen, good morning!

I am pleased to greet a company that is among the most important players in economic and social life in Italy and Europe, with significant presences in other countries. A company that, operating in a crucial sector, that of electricity grid management, is behind the energy that every citizen uses every day. So you are an operator of the common good, the good of each and every one. When we turn on the light in our homes, we do not consider that this act functions thanks to the work of so many people, their intelligence and expertise, and also their sacrifices. Let us not forget those who have perished at work in the energy infrastructure, and let us ensure that there are no more of them.

You are committed to a future powered by *clean energy*, to new ways of consuming and producing it based increasingly on *renewable sources*. Indeed, there is a lot of dirty energy on the planet. Dirty, certainly, because of too many fossil and non-renewable sources; but also soiled by injustice, by wars that are born and fed by the hunger for energy; soiled by unfair labour relations, by concentrations of huge profits in a few hands, by unsustainable work rhythms that pollute corporate relations and people's souls. Good energy is not just a technological issue: production and consumption must become ever more equitable and inclusive. The challenge of inclusiveness, inclusion.

Indeed, energy inclusion, energy democracy, is a multi-dimensional challenge nowadays. One cannot be a *sovereign citizen* if one remains an *energy subject*. This is why the spread of *energy communities*, those new expressions of integral citizenship and democracy, which, with difficulty, are also developing in Italy, deserve to be supported and encouraged. And this is good.

You operate in a sector that is critical for the quality of life and for the very survival of the planet, so you bear a great responsibility. Listening and trying to answer questions is always an act of responsibility, even when there are no concrete answers yet. And, in cases that seem insoluble, you have to learn the art of *managing conflicts* - this is an art that we all have to learn: managing conflicts - so that they do not degenerate and explode; knowing that, especially in your sector, the solution does not lie in one side prevailing over the other, it lies in *technological innovation and creativity*. And let me emphasize that in creativity, to resolve conflicts, there is dialogue: this is so important, dialogue, to be able to engage in dialogue.

I congratulate you because you aim for transparency, for everyone to see how you operate, how profits are distributed and investments are chosen. You also have an Ethics Committee, and that is good. It would be important for every big company, every big bank, to have an ethics committee, possibly with external members, independent of ownership, and with employee representatives. Because the effects of big business and finance go far beyond their borders.

Finally, it is significant that we use the term "electricity grid" to mean the set of installations and connections that span and mark our territory. We use the word "network" a lot today, but we have also learnt what a network is by thinking of the electricity grid. A complex system, where everything is connected, where energy can reach the last house on a hill because behind that last stretch of cable there is a whole system that supports it. The grid is also a beautiful metaphor for human cooperation and reciprocity, for the relationship between the part and the whole.

A few decades ago, you also brought light into the homes of the poor. Those pylons and poles that carried electricity into the countryside were greeted with applause, as one greets a great gift. To understand this, we have to go back to the stories of our grandparents who were farmers, to the day when they flipped the first switch and everything in the house suddenly lit up. Many, that evening, said a prayer in gratitude for that "miracle" that improved their lives, that allowed their children to study better and everyone to bathe in hot water. Even today, in certain villages in Africa and Asia, even in Latin America, one sees clusters of young people at night under the few street lamps studying, because they do not have electricity in their homes.

It is no coincidence that, during wars, the first infrastructures struck in cities are the electrical ones, because this directly affects the lives of families, and lowers people's morale.

Dear friends, work is also social love, civil fraternity. You put your intelligence, your soul, your heart, and your love into producing and distributing energy. We should remember this more, and therefore be more thankful.

I bless you all, I bless your work, I bless your creativity, I bless your patience. And I ask you to please pray for me. Thank you.
