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Audience with participants in the General Chapters of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary and the Sisters of the Divine Saviour

This morning, in the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the participants in the General Chapters of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary (Picpus) and the Sisters of the Divine Saviour, on the occasion of their General Chapters.

The following is the address delivered by the Pope to those present during the audience:

[Dialogue before the address]

Holy Father: But how many novices do you have?

Religious sister: five

Holy Father: ¿De dónde?

Religious sister: From various parts of the world: Congo, Asia, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Colombia...

Holy Father: And you?

Religious brother: In the Congregation, we are from various countries. They come from the islands, from Tonga, then from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a few from Latin America.

Holy Father: Keep going! You are a good delegation!

Dear brothers and sisters,

I am pleased to welcome you while you are experiencing your respective General Chapters.

I welcome you all, dear capitular men and women religious of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, and I remind you that the celebration of a General Chapter does not respond to human logic or an institutional need, but a requirement of following Jesus in the *sequela Christi*. This following always implies careful listening to what the Holy Spirit suggests to us every day in order to live faithfully the identity and the mission proper to the Congregation.

As disciples, you are called to listen to the voice of Jesus, to contemplate more deeply and to be capable of living and proclaiming the love of God incarnate in Him, particularly through service to those most in need, and through Eucharistic and reparatory prayer, you too in along this line.

Only by following Christ with fidelity and docility, will your structures, as well as the spread of the spiritual and historical patrimony of the Congregation, be able to enjoy a renewed springtime that will make your charism shine at the present moment in the history of humanity. The charism is the style that a congregation has, the evangelical style, because the Gospel is inexhaustible; this is why it makes all styles possibility. May the sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary urge you to find ever new forms of witness before your brothers and sisters and of collaboration in the work of God.

I therefore invite you to listen carefully to God's will, which is not easy, and to take decisive steps in following Christ, which does not consist merely in learning a doctrine, but also in adopting a style of life. I assure you of my closeness and my prayer, so that you may be renewed through inspired discernment and supported by Gospel values, and so that the desire to live joined with Christ and stay faithful to the foundational charism may be intensified in your hearts.

I greet you too, *Sisters of the Divine Saviour*, who are celebrating your General Chapter with a demanding theme: "*Walking together, rekindling the gift of the Spirit in our midst to proclaim the Gospel and enflame all people*". Four things: walking together – not against, rekindling the gift of the Spirit in our midst, proclaiming the Gospel and enflaming all people. Go forward. It recalls the foundation of your charism: the heartfelt prayer that Jesus addresses to the Father during the Last Supper, for the salvation of all men: "This is eternal life, that they know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent" (*Jn 17:3*).

And it is precisely there, in the Upper Room, that I invite you to pause at length in prayer, especially in these days of the Chapter. Indeed, there the flame of the Spirit is fed, and from there one sets out again to set the whole world ablaze with his love, serving the needy and restoring hope to the disheartened (cf. Bull *Spes non confundit*, 3). This is the legacy left to you by Blessed Francis Mary of the Cross and Blessed Mary of the Angels, who wanted you to be a "universal missionary congregation".

We are taught this by Mary, "lodestar" of the mission, who in the Gospel speaks little, listens a lot and cherishes in her heart. They are valid attitudes for us too: to speak little (chatter is a scourge, isn't it?) – to exchange, open up, but not to get lost in pointless chatter; to listen a lot, in prayer, in silence, in attention to others. At times we do not know how to listen: the other speaks and halfway through we reply. No: listen to everything, right up to the end. Listen to the Lord too – and cherish in your heart, so as to be apostles of hope, in a world that is in great need of it today. And in this regard, I would like to conclude by recalling a characteristic feature of Our Lady: she never shows herself – this is curious – but always Jesus (cf. *Catechesis*, 4 January 2023). "Do whatever he will tell you". This is Our Lady: she points to Jesus, always. Never herself. "Look at me, because I am immaculate"... Our Lady never says this. She always indicates Jesus. We must learn this: to show Jesus to others, because for everyone, today and always, our hope is in the Lord, it is in Him (cf. *Heb 10:23*).

Dear sisters, dear brothers, thank you for your visit, and I invoke the light and the strength of the Holy Spirit for your work in these days, and for the future journey of your communities. I bless you from my heart, and please, pray for me. But pray for, not against. Thank you!
