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Audience with a delegation of “The Economy of Francesco”

This morning, before the General Audience, the Holy Father Francis received in audience a delegation of “The Economy of Francesco”, to whom he delivered the following address:

Address of the Holy Father

Dear friends, welcome!

I am happy to know that you have given life, together with the Bishop of Assisi and the other promoters whom I have appointed, to “The Economy of Francis Foundation”. From your ideals an institution has been born. It is important because it will serve to sustain these ideals; and you will not only be its beneficiaries, but its protagonists, taking on the tasks assigned to you with enthusiasm and a sense of availability.

In these five years you have accomplished so much. Thank you for having taken seriously my invitation to “revive” the economy, and for accepting the guidelines I have given you at your annual conferences. They are part of the social doctrine of the Church and ultimately have their roots in the Gospel. You may have met many teachers in the course of your studies or work experiences or have even engaged in sincere dialogue with everyone, yet turning to the Gospel guarantees you an exceptional Master, Jesus, the only one who was able to say: “I am the way, and the truth and the life” (*Jn 14:6*).

Now a new phase begins for you. This beautiful reality of yours must grow, become stronger, reach more and more young people, and bear the fruits typical of the Gospel and goodness. Thank you for all that you have done and continue to do, which has exceeded all expectations. I wanted to focus on you, because young people have their whole lives ahead of them, they are a living “path”, and good things can come from such a path, while at the same time being careful to avoid the bad things.

The world of economics is in need of change. You will not change it only by becoming ministers, Nobel Prize winners or great economists, which are all good things. Rather you will change it above all by loving it, in the

light of God, by injecting into it the values and strength of goodness, with the evangelical spirit of Francis of Assisi: he was the son of a merchant, he knew the merits and defects of that world! Love the economy, concretely love the workers, the poor, prioritizing the situations of greatest suffering.

That is why I wanted to base the whole “Economy of Francis” movement on Saint Francis of Assisi who, by simply stripping himself of everything for the love of Jesus and the poor, also gave a new impetus to the development of the economy.

It is not the great and the powerful that change the world for the better: it is love that is the first and greatest factor for change. An economist who lived a holy life, Blessed Joseph Toniolo, wrote in this regard that the one who will truly save society “will not be a diplomat, a scholar, a hero, but a saint, indeed a society of saints”.

Today I would like to leave you with three words: *be witnesses, do not be afraid, hope without tiring*. Be witnesses, do not be afraid, hope without tiring.

First, *be witnesses*. If you want other young people to approach the economy with your ideals, those that we agreed to in the Assisi Covenant of 24 September 2022, it will be your witness of life that will attract them. Be consistent in your choices – consistency is not in fashion today! Seek to be appreciated for your projects and achievements, not for being numerous and powerful. Instead, transmit to many what you have received, namely the “good news” that, inspired by the Gospel, even the economy can change for the better.

Second: *do not be afraid*. I repeat what I said to the young people at WYD in Lisbon: “do not be administrators of fears, but entrepreneurs of dreams”. Pursue your dreams. There is so much to do, we must dare to use new words: Christians have always done this, they have never been afraid of novelties. They know that God is the Lord of history. It hurts me to see those Christians who hide in the sacristies because they are afraid of the world. They are not Christians, they are “defeated retirees”. Christians know that God is the Lord of history and they keep going forward.

Third word: *hope without tiring*. I know it is not easy to propose a new economy against a backdrop of new and old wars, while the arms industry prospers by taking resources away from the poor. Did you know that in some countries the most profitable investments are the manufacturing of arms? They profit by killing. In these cases, democracy is threatened, populism and inequalities grow, and the planet is increasingly wounded. It is not easy, in fact, it is very difficult. Perhaps sometimes you have the impression that you are “tilting at windmills”. So let us remember what Jesus said to the disciples: “Do not be afraid”. He will help you, and the Church will not leave you alone.

The Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development – Sister Alessandra Smerilli is here – continues to stand by your side, opening to you, as far as possible, the doors of cooperation with the particular Churches scattered throughout the world. This will help you to establish contacts and synergies with many realities and networks of people who share your same ideals. The Dicastery will also accompany the activities of the Foundation, whose constitutional documents I am receiving today, and it will be the reality with which you will be able to give life and substance to the dream of changing the economy of today and giving a soul to the economy of tomorrow. In your midst, may a new way of being together and doing business be born that does not produce waste but material and spiritual well-being.

Have courage, dear friends, have courage! If you are faithful to your vocation, your life will blossom, you will have wonderful stories to tell your children and grandchildren. I see that there are some children here, which is very nice in a culture where people often prefer to have puppies or cats and not children. We need to shake Italy up a bit! It is worth it, believe me; it is worth spending your life to change the world for the better. Go forward! I am with you, I accompany you and I bless you. And I ask you to please pray for me as well.
