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Audience with representatives of the Italian Confederation of Craft Trades and Small- and Medium-Sized Enterprises

This morning, in the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the representatives of the Italian Confederation of Craft Trades and Small- and Medium-Sized Enterprises (CNA) on the occasion of its annual assembly.

The following is the Holy Father's address to those present:

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

I welcome you with pleasure on the occasion of the annual assembly of the Italian Confederation of Craft Trades and Small- and Medium-Sized Enterprises. I greet the president and all the members of your trade association, which is very widespread throughout Italy.

Craftsmanship is very dear to me because it expresses well the value of human work. When we create with our hands, at the same time we activate the head and the feet: action is always the fruit of a thought and a movement towards others. Craftsmanship is a tribute to creativity; indeed, the artisan must know how to discern, in inert matter, a particular form that others cannot recognize. And this makes you collaborators in the creative work of God. We need your talent to restore meaning to human activity and to place it at the service of projects to promote the common good.

I would like to return with you to a well-known page of the Gospel: the parable of the talents (cf. *Mt 25:14-30*). A master leaves talents to his three servants, to put to good use. The one who received five shows himself to be enterprising, and earns another five. The one who received two did likewise, and earned another two. Both were praised by the master in the same way. It is not the quantity that counts, but the effort; what counts is the effort in making the gifts received bear fruit. Precisely what is lacking in the third servant, who out of fear and laziness hides his talent underground. He gave up resourcefulness because he did not cultivate a relationship of trust towards his master and with life, and towards others. A relationship of trust with others.

This parable is a hymn to trust in God, and an invitation to a healthy, positive “complicity” – if I may say this word – a “complicity” with God, who makes us sharers in His goods and counts on us, counts on our responsibility. If in life one wants to grow, it is necessary to leave fear behind and have trust. At times, especially when difficulties increase, we are tempted to think that the Lord is a referee or an implacable controller, rather than the One who encourages us to take our life into our own hands. But the Gospel always calls us to have an outlook of faith; not to think that what we achieve is the fruit only of our capabilities or our merits. It is also the fruit of the history of each one of us, it is the fruit of many people who have taught us to go forward in life, starting from parents. The work I do is the fruit of a history, that has made us capable of doing this. You too, if you are passionate about your work, and sometimes rightly complain that it is not adequately recognized, it is because you are aware of the value of what God has placed in your hands, not only for you but for everyone.

We all need to set aside the fear that paralyses and destroys creativity. We can do so even in the way we live our daily work, feeling that we are part of a great project of God, who is capable of surprising us with His gifts. Behind our riches there is not only skill, but also a Providence that takes us by the hand and leads us. Craftwork can express all this well, if it is accompanied day by day by the awareness that God never abandons us, that we are masterpieces of His hands, and therefore we are capable of realizing original works.

I would like to praise your work also because it makes the world beautiful. We live in times of war, and of violence... The news is like this everywhere, and this seems to make us lose trust in the capacities of the human being. A look at your activities consoles us and gives us hope. To beautify the world is to build peace. An economist told me that the investments that give the highest revenue today, in Italy, are weapons factories... This does not make the world beautiful; it is ugly. If you want to earn more, you must invest in killing. Think about this. Do not forget – I repeat- to beautify the world is to build peace. The Encyclical *Fratelli tutti* defined peacebuilders as artisans capable of initiating processes of healing and encounter, boldly and creatively (cf. no. 225). The same creativity and the same boldness you use to realize the many works destined to enrich the world.

God calls all men and women to work in artisanal fashion, like Him, and to work on that project of peace that He has. That is why He distributes his talents in abundance, so that, unlike the wars fomented by the enemy of God, they may be placed at the service of life and not buried in the barrenness of death and destruction.

Dear friends, thank you for what you are able to achieve through your work, and thank you also for your social commitment: this too is a task that requires patience, that requires planning! May Saint Joseph the Worker always inspire you to live work with creativity and passion. I bless all of you from my heart, I bless your families. And please, do not forget to pray for me. Thank you!
