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Audience with the Community of the Pontifical Romanian College of Rome

At 11.40 this morning, in the Consistory Hall of the Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the Community of the Pontifical Romanian College of Rome on the occasion of the eightieth anniversary of the founding of the College.

The following is the full text of the Pope's address to those present:

Holy Father's Address

Dear brothers and sisters,

I greet you with affection, and am happy to meet you on the eightieth anniversary of the foundation of your college. It is an opportunity to be grateful to God and to all those who over the years have dedicated themselves to ensuring that the Romanian College contributes well to the formation of future pastors. The path you are following is part of a story that precedes you and at the same time awaits the future of the Greek-Catholic Romanian Church. I would therefore like to express two hopes for you: to preserve memory and to cultivate hope.

Preserve memory. Your College emerged in a period of development for the Eastern Catholic communities; it later suffered as a result of the tragic events linked to atheist persecution, to then witness a beautiful rebirth and opening up to new challenges in recent years. This history, made up of great witnesses of faith and moments of trial, of hard winters and of thriving springs, belongs to you. It is good to preserve it, not to remain anchored to the past, but to live the events that each epoch presents with the support of a living evangelical memory that embraces a history greater than us and which always remains open to the action of the Spirit. To cherish, through prayer and intense study, what the Lord has accomplished in His People, is a great opportunity in the years you spend in Rome, where you can breathe in the universality of the Church.

By strengthening your ecclesial memory, you will be helped to overcome a dangerous temptation that may arise: adapting to mediocrity, settling for a "normal" life – in quotation marks! – where everything goes ahead without zeal or ardour, and where sooner or later you end up becoming jealous guardians of your own time, your own

security, your own well-being. Instead, stimulated by the examples of your great witnesses in the faith, aspire to an inflamed ministry of the Gospel, with the strong and genuine flavour of the gift. A pastor, as a disciple modelled on Christ Who gave His life “to the end” (John 13: 1), cannot allow himself to come to terms with a mediocre life or to adapt to situations without taking any risk. Your college is increasingly a “gym” where you train yourselves in giving life willingly; your studies are tools of service for the Church, which also embellish the rich cultural tradition of your beloved country. Preserving memory, then, is not simply remembering the past, but laying the groundwork for the future, for a future of hope. If we do not preserve memory, we end up in the mediocrity of clericalism.

Cultivating hope is my second wish for you. There is so much need to nurture Christian hope, that hope that gives a new outlook, capable of discovering and seeing good, even when it is obscured by evil: “If hope revives our eyes, we will see what is hidden”, wrote St. Ephraim (*Carmen Nisib.*, 70). The Acts of the Apostles, which the Liturgy offers us in this Easter season, show how the Church, who lives with faith in the Risen Lord and perseveres in prayer, communion, and charity, never loses sight of this hope and gives it to the world, even when it is without means, misunderstood and opposed. I wish your home to be a cenacle where the Spirit forms missionaries of hope, contagious bearers of the presence of the Risen Lord, courageous in creativity and never disheartened in the face of problems and lack of means. May the Holy Spirit also inspire in you the desire to seek and promote, with a purified heart, the path of concord and unity among all Christians.

Dear brothers and sisters, while through you, my greeting is intended to reach your major archbishop and the bishops of the Synod, I would also like to address affectionately the students of the Pontifical College of St. Ephraim present here, welcomed by your community welcomes. By meeting you, I think of the situation in which so many faithful find themselves in your lands; many families who are forced to leave their home in the face of waves of violence and suffering. I wish to embrace these brothers and sisters in a special way, together with their Patriarchs and bishops. With them, I invoke the Paschal gift of peace: may Jesus, refuge Who encourages and consoles, “the hope of those without hope” (cf. St. Ephraim, *The Second Coming of Our Lord*, 24-25), inspire hearts and minds so that ways of reconciliation and good may finally be opened.

I thank you and I ask you, please, do not forget about me in your prayers. Thank you.
