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Audience with members of the Parliamentary Anti-Mafia Commission

At 12.15 today, in the Clementine Hall of the Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the members of the Parliamentary Anti-Mafia Commission with their families.

The following is the Pope's address to those present.

Address of the Holy Father

Honourable Deputies and Senators

I am glad to welcome you and I thank the president of the Commission, the Right Honourable Ms. Bindi, for her kind words.

Firstly, I would like to turn my thoughts to all those people who in Italy have paid for their fight against the mafia groups with their lives. I remember, in particular, three magistrates: the Servant of God Rosario Livatino, killed on 21 September 1990; Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino, killed twenty five years ago along with their security escorts.

As I prepared for this meeting, several Gospel scenes came to mind, in which we would have no difficulty in recognising the signs of that moral crisis that people and institutions are going through today. The truth of Jesus' words still remains valid today: "What comes out of a person is what defiles him. For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person" (*Mk 7: 20-23*).

The starting point is always *the heart of man*, his relations and his attachments. We will never be able to be sufficiently vigilant over this abyss, where the person is exposed to the temptations of opportunism, deceit and fraud, made more dangerous by the refusal to question it. When one closes oneself in self-sufficiency it is easy

to arrive at self-satisfaction and the claim to be a law to oneself. It is also the sign of deviant politics, twisted to serve partisan interests and murky agreements. Then one reaches the point of suffocating appeals to the conscience, of normalising evil, of confusing truth with lies and exploiting the role of public responsibility one holds.

Authentic politics, which we recognise as an eminent form of charity, works instead by ensuring a future of hope and promoting the dignity of every person. Precisely for this reason the fight against the mafia is felt to be a priority, inasmuch as it steals the common good, removing hope and dignity from the people.

For this purpose, it becomes decisive to oppose oneself in every way to the grave problem of corruption which, with disdain for the general interest, represents a fertile ground in which the mafias engage and develop. Corruption always finds a way to justify itself, presenting itself as the “normal” condition, the solution for those who are “cunning”, a feasible way of reaching one’s objectives. It has a contagious and parasitical nature, since it is not nurtured by the good it produces but by what it subtracts and steals. It is a poisonous root that distorts healthy competition and deters investment. In the end, corruption is a *habitus* built on the idolatry of money and the commercialisation of human dignity, which is why it must be combated with measures no less incisive than those envisaged in the fight against the mafias.

Fighting against the mafias means not only repressing. It also means *reclaiming, transforming, and building*, and this involves commitment at two levels. The first is *political*, through greater social justice, as the mafias find it easy to offer themselves as an alternative system in territories where rights and opportunities are missing: work, housing, education and healthcare.

The second level of engagement is *economic*, through the correction or cancellation of those mechanisms that generate inequality and poverty everywhere. Today we can no longer talk about combating the mafias without raising the enormous problem of a financial system that is now sovereign over democratic rules, as a result of which criminal organisations invest and multiply the already enormous profits deriving from their activities: drugs, weapons, human trafficking, toxic waste disposal, the influencing of contracts for major works, gambling and rackets.

This dual level, political and economic, presupposes another, no less essential, which is the construction of a *new civil conscience*, and this alone is able to lead to true liberation from the mafias. It is truly necessary to educate, and to educate oneself, in constant vigilance over oneself and the context in which one lives, developing a more nuanced perception of the phenomena of corruption and working towards a new way of being citizens, including care and responsibility for others and for the common good.

Italy must be proud of having put legislation into effect against the mafia, involving the state and citizens, administrations and associations, the lay sphere and the Catholic and religious worlds, in a broad sense. The assets confiscated from the mafias and recovered for social use represent, in this respect, authentic workshops for life. In these contexts young people study, learn knowledge and responsibilities, and find work and fulfilment. In these also the elderly, poor and disadvantaged may find welcome, service and dignity.

Finally, it must not be forgotten that the fight against the mafias is bound with the protection and valorisation of witnesses of justice, people who expose themselves to grave risk by choosing to report the violence of those against whom they testify. A way must be found to enable an upstanding person, who nonetheless belongs to mafia families or contexts, to exit without being subject to revenge and retaliation. There are many women, especially mothers, who seek to do so, refusing criminal logic and with the desire to ensure a different future for their children. It is necessary to help them, certainly respecting the ways of justice, but also their dignity as people who choose good and life.

Dear brothers and sisters, urging you to continue with dedication and a sense of duty the task entrusted to you for the good of all, I invoke God’s blessing upon you. May you be comforted by the certainty of being accompanied by He Who is rich in mercy; and may the awareness that He does not tolerate violence and abuse make you tireless workers of justice. Thank you.
