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Audience with the participants in the Plenary of the Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelisation

At 11.45 this morning, in the Consistory Hall of the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the participants in the plenary session of the Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelisation, on the occasion of the conclusion of the meetings which took place in the Vatican from 27 to 29 September 2017.

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

Address of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters,

I am very glad, at the conclusion of the Plenary Session of the Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelisation, to reflect with you on the urgency that the Church is aware of, in this particular historical moment, to renew her forces and enthusiasm in her perennial mission of evangelisation. I greet you all and I thank Msgr. Fisichella for his words of greeting and for the effort that the dicastery intends to make in continuing to keep alive in the ecclesial community the fruits of the Jubilee of Mercy.

This Holy Year was a moment of grace that the entire Church lived with great faith and intense spirituality. We cannot permit, therefore, that so much enthusiasm be diluted or forgotten. The People of God has strongly felt the gift of mercy and lived the Jubilee, rediscovering in particular the Sacrament of Reconciliation, as a special place for experiencing God's goodness and tenderness, and His forgiveness that knows no bounds. The Church thus has the great responsibility of continuing tirelessly to be an instrument of mercy. In this way it can easily be ensured that the welcome of the Gospel is perceived and lived as an event of salvation and may bring full and definitive meaning to personal and social life.

The announcement of mercy, which is made concrete and visible in the *lifestyle* of believers, lived in the light of the many works of mercy, belongs intrinsically to every evangeliser, who has discovered first-hand the call of the

apostolate, precisely by virtue of the mercy reserved to him. The words of the apostle Paul should never be forgotten by those who have the task of proclaiming the Gospel: “I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because He judged me faithful, appointing me to his service, though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display His perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in Him for eternal life” (1 *Tim* 1: 12-16).

And we come now to the theme of evangelisation. It is necessary to discover ever more that it by nature *belongs to the People of God*. In this regard, I would like to underline two aspects.

The first is *the contribution that the individual peoples and the respective cultures* offer to the journey of the People of God. From every people towards which we go there emerges a wealth that the Church is called to recognise and value to bring to fulfilment the unity of “all the human race” of which it is a “sign” and “sacrament” (cf. Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, 1). This unity is not constituted “according to the flesh, but in the Spirit” (*ibid.*), which guides our steps. The richness that comes to the Church from the many good traditions that the individual peoples possess is valuable to give life to the action of grace that opens the heart to welcoming the announcement of the Gospel. They are authentic gifts that express the infinite variety of the creative action of the Father, and which merge in the unity of the Church to increase the necessary communion so as to be a seed of salvation, prelude of universal peace and concrete locus of dialogue.

Being an evangelising people (cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 111) brings awareness – and it is the second aspect – of an appeal that transcends each individual personal willingness, to be inserted in a “complex interweaving of personal relationships” (*ibid.*, 113), which enables the experience of the profound unity and humanity of the community of believers. And this applies in a particular way in a period such as ours, in which we are forced to face a new culture, the fruit of technology that, while it fascinates us for the conquests it offers, it makes equally evident the lack of a true interpersonal relationship and interest in the other. Few realities such as the Church can claim to have a knowledge of the people able to valorise that cultural, moral and religious heritage that constitutes the identity of entire generations. It is important, therefore, that we know how to penetrate into the *heart of our people*, to discover that sense of God and His love that offers the confidence and hope to look ahead with serenity, despite the grave difficulties and poverty that many are forced to live due to the greed of the few. If we are still able to look in depth, we will rediscover the genuine desire for God that makes restless the heart of many people who have fallen, despite themselves, into the chasm of indifference, that prevents them from savouring life and building their future serenely. The joy of evangelisation can reach them and restore to them the strength for conversion.

Dear brothers and sisters, the new phase of evangelisation that we are called to journey through is certainly the work of all the Church, the “people journeying towards God”. Rediscovering this horizon of meaning and concrete pastoral practice will be able to promote the impetus to evangelisation itself, without forgetting its social value, for a genuine integral human promotion (cf. *ibid.*, 178).

I wish you good work, in particular for the preparation of the first World Day of the Poor, which will take place on 19 November. I assure you of my closeness and my support. May the Lord bless you and Our Lady keep you.
