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Message of the Holy Father Francis to the Director of the SIR Agency for the 30th anniversary of its founding

The following is the message sent by the Holy Father Francis to the director of the Information Agency of the Italian Episcopal Conference, SIR, Dr. Vincenzo Corrado, on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of its founding:

Message of the Holy Father

Dr. Vincenzo Corrado
Italian Episcopal Conference

Dear friends of the SIR Agency,

I am happy to reach you with this short message on the occasion of an important anniversary for your agency. Precisely in these days – 25 October – you commemorate the thirty years of the publication of your first bulletin that began the journalist activity of the SIR. What we are experiencing is an important year for all of you, and for this, I wish you well and send you a special memory for the professional activity you do every day.

Thirty years certainly represent an important achievement, but they are not and should not be considered a point of arrival. Continue your effort, always looking for the same novelty with which the founding fathers thought, before giving shape to a project that was unique of its kind: a tool for information that connects the Italian territory, represented by the diocesan weeklies, to the centre and that, at the same time, returns from the centre to the rest of the territory with the heads of the dioceses. You have been advocates of communion in information, both ecclesial and socio-cultural. Continue to be so!

The SIR, the information agency of the Italian Episcopal Conference, brings together the needs of different communities. With your daily newsletter, you report news on the Holy See, on the Italian Church, on the dioceses, on Europe, on the Middle East, on the whole world ... Now, as you know, I decided to dedicate the

53rd World Day of Social Communications, which is celebrated in 2019, to the theme “We are members of one the same body” (*Eph 4: 25*) *From communities to community*”. I know that you, for your part, are committed to promoting an information community, founded on authenticity and reciprocity.

Over the years, you have known how to follow technological developments, always keeping to your editorial line, so well expressed in 1988 by your late president, Msgr. Giuseppe Cacciari: “We would like to be judged and tested on objectivity, rigour of language, on documentation, on our attention to the causes and the implications of the religious event rather than on its instrumental, brilliant and ephemeral use for the curiosity of the moment”. This attention remains valid: just think of the phenomenon of “fake news”. Continue to practice your profession while always keeping to the truth. It is the most effective antidote to combat falsehood. And remember that “to discern the truth, we need to discern everything that encourages communion and promotes goodness from whatever instead tends to isolate, divide, and oppose” (see Message for the 52nd World Communications Day).

Thirty years are not a few, but this is the moment to think about the future. I encourage you to continue on the path of innovation, but without neglecting your outlook on all territories: Italian, European, Middle Eastern, international ... Territory is not a simple geographical border, it is something more: it indicates the existence of people that inhabit it. Following the diocesan weeklies, give a voice to those who have no voice. Shine your lights on all the peripheries. Take responsibility for communicating with the stories you tell. Become more passionate about the truth. *Be custodians of the news*. “In today’s world [the journalist’s] is, in every sense, not just a job; it is a mission. Amid feeding frenzies and the mad rush for a scoop, they must remember that the heart of information is not the speed with which it is reported or its audience impact, but persons. Informing others means forming others; it means being in touch with people’s lives” (see Message for the 52nd World Communications Day).

Dear friends, I accompany you in your work. I hope you will always be ready to listen and to engage in sincere dialogue, to let the truth emerge. I encourage you to focus more and more on the fullness of quality information that can build bridges of understanding and dialogue. Walk, as you have done so far, on the beautiful and tiring paths of thought, of not compromising with anyone. Be free and keep your distance from reductive models. Help to understand the facts in their complexity and their deep meaning.

I bless you from the heart and you, please, do not forget to pray for me

Vatican City, 21 October 2018

FRANCIS
