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PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS

# **BOLLETTINO**

SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

N. 190914f

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## **Audience with the members of the Abraham Community for the 30th anniversary of its founding**

At 11.00 this morning, in the Paul VI Hall, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the members of the Abraham Community on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of its founding.

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

### **Address of the Holy Father**

Thank you for the joy you express! Expressing joy is a grace of God. Let us thank the Lord Who has sown such joy in your hearts. I am happy to meet you on the thirtieth anniversary of the founding of your community. The Lord never stops surprising us, opening up new paths for following Jesus, with the creativity of the Holy Spirit. I thank you for the words you have addressed to me. You are a young community, and for this reason you bring with you the enthusiasm characteristic of those who wish to share the beauty of having encountered Christ in their life.

You bear a challenging name, "Abraham", which inspires the path of evangelization that you are called to carry out in the most diverse conditions in which you find yourselves. Do not be afraid to allow your life and your actions to be inspired indeed by the great Patriarch Abraham, our father in faith. May he teach you, first of all, to obey the call of the Lord. It does not matter how and under what circumstances the Lord is present in your life. The Lord is creative, He is the Lord of surprises, when we least expect it He comes and He shows us different and original paths. He – and He alone! – knows the places and times in which to meet each one. You are, I would say, rather noisy when you are together, but good noise, that of the Holy Spirit, is born of the silence of listening. If there is not the silence of listening, noise is not a noise "anointed" by the strength of the Holy Spirit. What is important is to listen to his voice. To be able to perceive his word, the silence of listening is necessary. As a great bishop, Saint Ignatius of Antioch, wrote to the first Christian generations of Ephesus: "A word uttered by the Father, and he was his Son, and he always speaks in eternal silence, and in silence he must be heard". I hope that you will always know how to find moments of true silence in your life; this is the secret to being able to listen to God Who speaks: silence.

Abraham's faith leads him to leave his land and his home to go to a place he does not know, but which is guaranteed by God's promise. To be evangelizers, one must trust God and be ready to leave, to go forth, not just once, but rather to assume a style of "exodus". But let us think also of Moses, the same thing... Think of Saint Joseph: I believe that Saint Joseph, at the end of his life, was afraid of falling asleep because every time he fell asleep, his plans were changed! This style of exodus. It is important to go out to meet those whom the Lord places on our way.

When the Apostle Peter wrote his first letter, he addressed young communities, perhaps even a little afraid to express their faith; yet he urged them to trust in the hope received from Christ. He always urged them to do so "with meekness and respect, with a righteous conscience" (1 Pt 3:15-16). The meekness that the Spirit gives us makes us witnesses, because the path of the Holy Spirit is not proselytism, it is witness. If someone comes to proselytize this is not the Church, it is a sect. The Church that the Lord wants, as Pope Benedict XVI said, does not grow by proselytism, it grows by attraction, that is, the attraction of witness, and behind witness there is always the Holy Spirit. This is a methodology that we are called to live in the work of evangelization. We need to walk together with the people of our time, to listen to what they carry in their hearts, to offer them, with our lives, the most credible response, that is, the one that comes from God, through Jesus Christ. It always does me good to listen to that advice Saint Francis of Assisi gave to his confreres when he sent them to evangelize: "Go, proclaim the Gospel, if necessary also with words". First with witness; then they will ask you, "But why are you like this?", and then it will be the moment to speak.

Abraham's faith was fruitful beyond any human expectation. And it saw its fulfilment in Jesus, through a humble daughter of Abraham, the Virgin Mary, in whom Christ reflected his "Here I am" to the Father. May she also help you to be docile to the action of the Holy Spirit, and in this way your witness and enthusiasm will be an effective instrument in the service of the Gospel. Go forward, in faith and charity, especially towards the poorest and most marginalized, always trusting in God's promise.

I accompany you with my blessing. And you, please, do not forget to pray for me: I need it, because this work is not easy! Thank you!

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