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Audience with a Delegation of Fishers from San Benedetto del Tronto (Ascoli Piceno)

This morning the Holy Father Francis received in audience a delegation of fishermen from San Benedetto del Tronto (Ascoli Piceno).

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

Greeting of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters,

I am pleased to meet you and I greet you all warmly. I thank your bishop for his words, as well as the priests present here, who spiritually accompany your work and your families. Along the coast of the Marches, you go out in good and bad weather to take from the sea what is necessary to live, with great passion, many sacrifices and also some danger. And your loved ones share the difficulties and the precariousness that your type of live involves.

You are a significant category in the social life of your territory. In the progress that characterizes modern society, the fisherman may at times be tempted by the desire for a stable job on dry land. Yet those who are born by the sea can never remove the sea from their heart. I urge you not to lose hope in the face of the hardships and uncertainties you are unfortunately facing: you are not lacking in courage! At the same time, your often risky and hard work needs to be valued, and your rights and your legitimate aspirations need to be supported.

For my part, I would like to express my particular appreciation for the seabed reclamation activity that you have undertaken with the support of other associations and the collaboration of the competent authorities. This initiative is very important, both on account of the large amount of waste, especially plastic waste, that you have recovered, and –I would say above all – because it can and is already becoming a model that can be repeated in other areas of Italy and abroad. The operation “*A Pesca di Plastica*” (“Fishing for Plastic”) which you have

carried out on a voluntary basis, is an example of how local civil society can and must contribute to tackling issues of global importance, without subtracting from, on the contrary stimulating, the responsibility of institutions.

Dear friends, yours is an ancient job. Even in the Gospel we read a series of events related to the life and world of fishermen. Jesus' first disciples were "your colleagues", and He called them to follow Him just as they were setting up their nets on the shore of the Lake of Galilee. I like to think that even today, those of you who are Christians feel the spiritual presence of the Lord beside you. Your faith animates precious values: popular religiosity which is expressed in trust in God, in the sense of prayer and in the Christian education of children; esteem for the family; a sense of solidarity, so that you feel the need to help one another and to help each other in need. Do not lose these values!

With these wishes, I entrust you to the protection of the Virgin Mary, whom you venerate as "Our Lady of the Sea", and of your patron Saint Francis of Paola. I invoke the Lord's blessing upon you, your families and your work. And I ask you, please, to pray for me. Thank you!
