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Audience with the Charles de Foucauld Spiritual Family Association.

This morning, before the General Audience, the Holy Father Francis received in audience, in the study of the Paul VI Hall, the members of the Charles de Foucauld Spiritual Family Association, in Rome for the canonization last Sunday of Brother Charles.

The following are the Pope's words of greeting to those present:

Greeting of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters,

Welcome! I am glad to meet you and to share with you your joy for the canonization of Brother Charles. In him we can see a prophet for our time, who knew how to bring to light the *essentiality* and *universality* of faith.

Essentiality, condensing the meaning of believing into two simple words, in which there is everything: "Jesus – Caritas"; and above all, returning to the spirit of the origins, the spirit of Nazareth. I hope that you too, like Brother Charles, will continue to imagine Jesus who walks in the midst of the people, who patiently carries out laborious work, who lives the daily life of a family and of a city. How happy the Lord is to see that he is imitated in the way of smallness, humility, sharing with the poor! Charles de Foucauld, in the silence of the hermit's life, in worship and in service to his brothers, wrote that while "we are inclined to favour works, whose effects are visible and tangible, God gives first place to love and then to sacrifice inspired by love and to obedience derived from love" (*Letter to Marie de Bondy*, 20 May 1915). As a Church we need to return to the essential – return to the essential! – not to get lost in so many secondary matters, at the risk of losing sight of the simple purity of the Gospel.

And then *universality*. The new Saint lived his Christian existence as a brother to all, starting from the smallest. He did not have the aim of converting others, but of living God's freely given love, putting into effect "the apostolate of goodness". He wrote: "I want to accustom all Christians, Muslims, Jews and idolaters to consider

me as their brother, the universal brother" (*Letter to Maria de Bondy*, 7 January 1902). And to do this, he opened the doors of his house so that it might be "a port" for all, "the shelter of the Good Shepherd". I thank you for bearing this witness, which does so much good, especially at a time when there is a risk of closing in on particularisms, of increasing distances, of losing sight of one's brother. We unfortunately see this in the news every day.

Brother Charles, in the hardships and poverty of the desert, remarked: "My soul is always in joy" (*Letter to Fr. Huvelin*, 1 February 1898). Dear sisters and brothers, may Our Lady grant you to cherish and nourish the same joy, because joy is the clearest witness we can give to Jesus in every place and at every time.

And I would also like to thank Saint Charles de Foucauld because his spirituality did me so much good when I was studying theology, a time of maturation and also of crisis, and which came to me through Father Paòli and through the books of Boignot which I read constantly, and helped me so much to overcome crises and to find a way of Christian life that was simpler, less Pelagian, closer to the Lord. I thank the Saint and bear witness to this, because it did me so much good.

I wish you a happy mission! I bless you and ask you, please, to continue to pray for me. Thank you!
