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Audience with participants in the General Chapter of the Missionaries of Mariannahill

This morning, in the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the participants in the General Chapter of the Missionaries of Mariannahill.

The following is the address delivered by the Pope during the meeting:

Address of the Holy Father

Dear brothers in Christ,

I am pleased to greet you as you prepare to conclude the 17th General Chapter of the Missionaries of Mariannahill. I thank the Superior General for his kind words of introduction and I offer my prayerful good wishes to him and to the Council.

Your Chapter takes place following the celebration of the first hundred years of the Congregation's life, and seeks to carry forward, amid the challenges of the present time, the zeal for evangelization that inspired Abbot Franz Pfanner and his Trappist companions to lay the foundations for its distinctive apostolate. It is my hope that your deliberations will confirm the Congregation in its founding charism, which combines fidelity to the evangelical counsels with passion for the spread of the Gospel *ad gentes* and the extension of Christ's kingdom of holiness, justice and peace.

The theme of the Chapter – *Solidarity: Called to be of One Mind and One Purpose* – is particularly timely in the light of the broader synodal journey undertaken in these months by the universal Church in preparation for next year's meeting of the Synod of Bishops. This ecclesial journey is meant to foster the communion, participation and missionary commitment of all the baptized through a process of spiritual discernment centred on encounter, listening and reflection, and thus to arrive at an ever-greater openness to the newness of the Spirit and his promptings. An essential element along the synodal path is the development of a greater sense of co-responsibility on the part of the lay faithful for the Church's life and future.

This concern is clearly reflected in your Chapter's reference to the impassioned plea of Saint Paul to the Christian community of Corinth to be "united in the same mind and the same purpose" (1 Cor 1:10). The history of your Congregation shows that, from the beginning, your preaching of the Gospel has been accompanied by efforts to encourage native vocations, to promote an integral human development within local communities, and to develop a spirit of shared responsibility for the common good. As you persevere in your efforts to further this unity and solidarity in the service of the Gospel, I encourage you to foster a constant pastoral conversion that can find expression in every dimension of your Congregation's life and activity, from priestly training and the spiritual formation of the laity to the concrete planning of apostolic projects. If the synodality to which the Church is called in our day involves walking together and listening together, surely the first voice to which we must listen should be that of the Holy Spirit (cf. *Address to the Faithful of the Diocese of Rome*, 18 September 2021).

Not far from us is the great obelisk in Saint Peter's Square. All of you are familiar with the impression made on Abbot Pfanner by the story of the raising of the great monolith. Despite the immense human effort involved, the obelisk could only be saved from falling at the last moment by pouring water on the ropes. Today, as ever, the water of the Holy Spirit is needed, not only to prosper the work of our hands, but above all to soften the hard soil of our hearts. I assure you of my prayers that, through a fresh outpouring of the Spirit, your Chapter will bear abundant spiritual fruit for the growth of the Missionaries of Mariannahill in holiness and in faithful service to the Gospel. I pray that for this "softening" of hearts through charity: may hardness of heart and closed-mindedness yield to charity, proximity and the gentle words that the Spirit brings forth when he is at work in our hearts. And for a fine spirit of meekness too. I commend you and your confrères to the loving intercession of Mary, Mother of the Church, I willingly grant you my blessing. And I ask you, please, to pray for me. Thank you.
