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Audience with the Diocesan Oblate Brothers, Milan

This morning, the Holy Father Francis received in audience a delegation of Diocesan Oblate Brothers from Milan. The following is the text of the greeting he handed to them during the meeting:

Greeting of the Holy Father

Dear brothers, good morning and welcome!

I thank the Superior for his greeting, and I am pleased to welcome a group of consecrated brothers. For me, the occasions in which I can meet consecrated brothers are precious: it is a witness of the value of this presence in the Church, which deserves to be rediscovered. Therefore, I thank you and I encourage you, because you are a sign, small but important, I would say indispensable, in the mosaic of vocations in the Church.

First and foremost, you are a sign of *fraternity in accordance with the Gospel*. And you are thus precisely with your way of *being brothers*: not with the things you do, with the organization, the activities... All these things are good and necessary, but fraternity is built with a *concrete form of life*. A stable form, that each one of you naturally lives in a different way, with his own personality and his own gifts, and also his own limits; but the common and qualifying characteristic is this fraternity. And I think – I hope – that this will be for you a reason for inner joy, because it is your way of resembling Jesus, who lived this dimension of being a brother to every man, a universal brother. It is an aspect proper to the mystery of the Incarnation. This is the first thing I hope for you: the joy of being brothers.

You are *oblato* brothers. This is the second aspect: oblation, *self-giving in service*. Jesus, in the form of God, assumed the form of a servant, but take note: not a service of the kind that everyone says: how good!, a service to be applauded, that "makes headlines". No. A hidden, humble, sometimes even humiliating service. This - we know - is the way forward for every Christian. You, however, have it by charisma: oblation. And here too, to those who live this way, the Holy Spirit gives an inner joy. Mother Teresa often spoke of it: the joy of serving. When Mary went to help Elizabeth, there were no photographers waiting for her, no journalists. No one knew.

And therein lies the joy: that only the Lord knows! The blessedness of service. This is my second wish.

And the last aspect is related to the fact that you are *diocesan*. Diocesan Oblate Brothers. This too is a dimension of the Incarnation: to be faithful to a land, to a people, to a diocese. Sometimes we would like to save the world! But God says to you: be faithful to that service, to those people, to that work... Jesus saved the world by giving his life for the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and so he fulfilled the fidelity of the Father; he loved to the end those whom the Father had given him, he shed his blood for them, and so he shed it for all. This is the law of love: one cannot love humanity in the abstract, one loves that person, those people. Loyalty is a rare asset! It is already said in a psalm: "the faithful have vanished from among the sons of men" (Ps 12:2). Diocesan service is a *school of fidelity*. And you do it by your being oblate brothers.

Fraternity, oblation, being diocesan. A good life plan! May the Lord accompany you always on this path, and Our Lady keep you in joy and fidelity. I bless you from my heart, and I ask you, please, to pray for me. Thank you!
