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Audience with members of the “Consejo Empresarial de América Latina

This morning, in the Vatican Apostolic Palace, Pope Francis received in audience the members of the “Consejo Empresarial de América Latina”.

The following is the Holy Father’s address to those present at the meeting:

Address of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters,

Thank you for this initiative to bring together Latin American entrepreneurs to address social issues that affect us all, such as employment, migration, climate change and integral human development, among others.

I have noticed during this time that the same concerns that you are raising are also present in other parts of the world, and that is why this exchange can help us to join forces to face together problems that are now common to the entire human family.

As I said earlier to a group of European businesspeople, it is essential to approach our work from the perspective of a culture of encounter. It is the values of such a culture that inspire the business world to defend itself against the shadows of evil, which invade us when profit at all costs distorts our relationships, to the point of degrading or enslaving people. The culture of encounter, on the other hand, expresses the pursuit of the common good, thus helping to dispel these shadows.

And these values are tangibly embodied in the many daily efforts and sacrifices that your companies make to move forward, to train and update their workers, to avoid conflicts and to avoid the pain of dismissal, also aware that behind each worker there is a family, and society as a whole.

I propose, therefore, that you be like the first followers of Jesus, "builders of networks". That is what they worked at, in order to be able to fish. In order to carry out their work as fishermen, they needed to weave nets, strong and effective nets. In the same way, in order to be able to face the sea of the world and the storms that arise, and to achieve the goal you are seeking, you must be united, creating nets, helping one another. The service you perform is not abstract to each person and to each people; it is a service to every person, a service to every people, and that is why it is necessary to act together, bypassing no one and leaving no one behind. It is quite a complex challenge.

It is significant that you have chosen to come to Rome for this meeting. Here is the tomb of the Apostle Peter - an expert in weaving and mending nets - and the footsteps of numerous disciples of the Lord of all times who, by their daily witness and moved by faith, were able - with God's grace - to transform the environment in which they lived in the light of the Gospel. May these examples help you too to renew yourselves inwardly in order to move forward.

So, we might say that we have a valuable tool: the *nets*, and a compass: the *Gospel*. Now it is time for dialogue on how best to put them into practice. We could add that we also have an anchor: *hope*. And now we can set sail, confident that it is God who guides and accompanies us along the way.

May Jesus bless you, may he bless your families and those who are part of your endeavours, and may the Holy Virgin watch over you. And please, do not forget to pray for me.
