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Audience with the communities of the Pius Latin American, Pius Brazilian and Mexican Colleges

This morning, in the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the communities of the Pius Latin American, Pius Brazilian and Mexican Colleges.

The following is the text of the greeting prepared by the Pope for the occasion and handed to those present:

Greeting of the Holy Father

Dear brother bishops,

As I do every year, I have the pleasure of joining with you, this time with the three Colleges together – Pius Brazilian, Pius Latin American, and Mexican. I would like to convey to you my reflection on a theme central to the life of priests: love.

Love, the first love, is what has brought us all here today, and keeping it alive is our *main* obligation. Any vocation is born of a love of predilection. As for every person, God has called us to be His children and, among them, He has entrusted a particular task to us, which brings us closer to Him: giving ourselves for others. They are our reason for being, the objective of our love, since in them we fulfil this service that the Lord asks of us.

Every man, every woman, every child presents themselves to my eyes as a member of that mystical body whose head is Christ. To act *in persona Christi* is to be a true icon of Jesus, and to make myself the “Veronica” of every face, of every tear. How? By drying them with my priestly vestments. In the first place, with *prayer*, by presenting every concrete situation in the presence of God: “Lord, he whom you love is suffering” (cf. *Jn* 11:3).

Secondly, with the *oblative offering*, Eucharistic, of all of our being. When Jesus says to us: “Are you able to drink the cup that I am to drink?”, He is not seeking a merely theoretical willingness to martyrdom, but a radical acceptance of the fact that we are here to do His will and to renounce our own. Our studies, our work and our

rest, every decision, both vital and daily, everything is in keeping with this service.

Thirdly, with *humility*, knowing that I am on a journey, in need of that prayer, even more than those I have been called to serve. The Lord Himself, at the moment of the cross, was comforted by an angel (cf. *Lk 22:43*). Do not underestimate the power of intercession of those whom God has placed in your way: the formators, your companion priests, those of your immediate environment. In short, trust in the prayer of all the members of the faithful People of God, and do not forget to pray for their pastors, and for me. May Jesus bless you and Saint Mary of Guadalupe, Empress of the Americas, keep you. Thank you.
