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Audience with participants in the General Chapter of the Order of the Most Holy Trinity and of the Captives (Trinitarians)

At 12.15 today, in the Clementine Hall of the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the participants in the General Chapter of the Order of the Most Holy Trinity and of the Captives (Trinitarians).

The following is the Pope's address to those present:

Address of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters!

With joy I welcome you on the occasion of your General Chapter. I thank the newly-elected superior, Fr. Luigi Buccarello, and wish him all the best for his service. Together with you I greet all the members of the Order and of the Trinitarian Family, and your collaborators.

I wish first of all to thank you for your various works of mercy, in schools, parishes, prisons and rehabilitation centres, and in a special way for the various initiatives with which you seek to support the Church who suffers for her faith in Christ. I urge you always to walk with "the poor and slaves" (Saint John the Baptist of the Conception, *Works*, III, 60), and that in every "House of the Holy Trinity" you may be witnesses of Jesus, Who came "to proclaim good news to the poor" (*Lk* 4: 18).

The theme of your Chapter is related to *youth and vocational pastoral ministry*. A vital theme for the Church, as highlighted by the recent Synod of Bishops dedicated to the young, and certainly of great importance for your Order.

It is not easy to find the focus in this pastoral area. Vocational work, any vocational work, is not proselytism. This

is a starting point: it is not proselytism. You yourselves acknowledge, in the *Instrumentum Laboris* of the Chapter, that you have difficulties in terms of language and the method of communicating with the world of the young. You rightly feel the need for a specific formation for your pastoral work of accompaniment and discernment. On the other hand, the culture of the great void caused by weak thought and relativism, which invite us to live “à la carte”, the culture of the fragmentary where great themes have lost their meaning, and the immanentism in which many young people are closed up could lead one to think that there is no space for a vocational offering in the faith of the new generations. But to draw this conclusion would be a grave error.

Indeed, today too there are young people who ardently seek the full meaning of their life, young people who are capable of unconditional dedication to great causes; young people who passionately love Jesus and who demonstrate great compassion for humanity. Are there young people who perhaps do not speak of the meaning and sense of life, but who mean this when they anxiously seek happiness, love, success, personal fulfilment? All this forms part of the world of *aspirations* of our young people, who need to be *ordered*, as the Creator did at the beginning of time, passing from chaos to order in the cosmos (cf. *Gen 1: 1-31*).

It is here that you too can and must enter, to help the young to harmonize their aspirations, and to put them in order. Without forgetting that they justly ask to be given a certain agency in this. The young cannot bear environments in which they do not find their space and where they do not receive stimuli. They must be protagonists, this is the key, and protagonists in movement, restless.

It is clear that “the worlds of today’s youth are many” (Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christus vivit*, 68). It takes creativity, that starts from the pastoral conversion to which we are called, to be able to arrive at them and make an evangelical proposal that helps them discern the vocation to which they are called in the Church. Both the final Document of the Synod and the Apostolic Exhortation *Christus vivit* may help you in the task of reaching the young where you are present as the Trinitarian Order. In this moment I would like to indicate some challenges that youth and vocational pastoral care present to us.

First of all, *closeness and accompaniment*. Young people want us close. Youth and vocational ministry requires accompaniment and this involves closeness, making oneself present in the life of the young, like Jesus with the disciples of Emmaus (see *Lk 24.15*). Young people want to have you as fellow travellers, to search together for the “wellsprings of living water” where they can satisfy the thirst for fullness that so many of them feel (see *Jn 4: 6-15*).

Closeness is the only thing that can guarantee a fruitful relationship - evangelically speaking - with young people. Open your homes and communities to young people, so that they can share your prayer and fraternity, but above all open your hearts to them. So that they can feel loved for what they are, as they are. Be for the young the elder brothers with whom they can talk, whom they can trust. Listen to them, talk to them, discern together. This is tiring! And this is the price: your tiredness. Let them feel that you really love them and for this you can offer them the high measure of love. What is the high measure of love? Holiness, a journey of Christian life that goes against the current, like that of the Beatitudes (see Apostolic Exhortation *Gaudete et exsultate*, 63-94).

Second, to be *outgoing*. There is a need to meet young people, not only those who are close to you, but also those who are far away (see *Ephesians 2:17*). Do not limit yourself to accepting those who come to you, but also go out to meet those who have moved away. Welcome them as they are. Never despise their limits. Support them and help them as far as possible. And, after meeting them, there is a need to listen to them, to call them, to arouse the desire to move to go beyond the comforts in which they rest (see *Preparatory Document of the Synod on youth*, III, 1); and we also need the “courage, warmth and tact to help others distinguish the truth from illusions or excuses” (*Christus vivit*, 293).

I encourage you to walk with them, leaving behind of prefabricated ideas – please, prefabricated pastoral care does not work! – without forgetting that, especially with the young, one must be persevering, one must sow and wait patiently for the seed to grow and one day, when the Lord wishes, bear fruit. Your job is to sow, God will make you grow and maybe others will reap the fruits. Your youth ministry is dynamic, participatory, cheerful, full

of hope, capable of taking risks, trusting. And always full of God, which is what young people need most to fill their yearning for fullness. A pastoral care full of Jesus, which is the only Way that leads them to the Father, the only Truth that satisfies their thirst, the only Life for which it is worth leaving everything (see *Jn* 14: 6; 1, 35-51).

And all this, why? *So they may be holy*. This is the motivation, the strength of all our religious life, and also of our action with young people: to bring them to God. Before the temptation of resignation, in youth and vocational pastoral care you are asked to have the evangelical boldness to cast the nets (see *Lk* 5: 5), even if it does not seem to be the right time or moment. Faced with a somnolent, sleepy and tired life, you are required to stay awake so as to be able to awaken others; you are asked to be prophets of hope and novelty, prophets of joy with your own life, knowing that the best youth and vocation ministry is to live the joy of your own vocation. And nobody should be excluded from this. A few weeks ago I read a letter – I believe it was made public – from a prisoner. The letter begins thus: “Dear Fra Cristoforo”. In prison he found *I promessi sposi* and began to read it, and saw that Fra Cristoforo had done the same things he had done. His restlessness and anxiety began there, and this prisoner is waiting for the moment to leave prison to enter a seminary. God calls everywhere, God does not have preferences for certain people, he calls everyone. Be courageous!

Dear brothers, let no-one rob you of your ability to dream and to prophesy! Let us break down our fears! Let us stand up! Young people, near and far, await us. May you be accompanied by my Apostolic Blessing for you and for all the brothers of the Order, for the members of the Trinitarian Family and all your collaborators. And you, please, pray for me, I need it. Thank you!
