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Audience with members of the Swedish Academy

Today, in the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the members of the Swedish Academy, to whom he addressed the following words:

Address of the Holy Father

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to meet once more with you, the members of the Swedish Academy. I thank the President for his kind introduction, and especially for emphasizing the word “dialogue” in his remarks.

I am sure that you too have observed that the prolonged crisis of the pandemic has tested our capacity to dialogue with others. This is no doubt due to the long periods of confinement and the fact that the entire experience of the pandemic has deeply affected people, often unconsciously. We find ourselves a little more distant from others, a little more reserved, perhaps more guarded, or simply less inclined to join with others, to work side by side, with the satisfaction and effort born of building something together. It is important to recognize this situation, which threatens each of us as persons, since it diminishes our capacity for relationships, and impoverishes society and the world around us. It also risks playing unwittingly into the hands of the culture of indifference.

I am certain that, from your privileged point of view, you share this concern. I fully agree, then, with your own observation, Mr President, that “in a time of crisis, every little step that can bring human beings closer to one another is of utmost importance”. It is the *daily practice of encounter and dialogue*: a “style” of living that makes no headlines, yet helps the human community to move forward and to grow in *social friendship*. I developed this theme in the sixth chapter of the Encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, entitled: *Dialogue and Friendship in Society* (Nos. 198-224).

With you, the Members of the Academy, who, so to say, “have the pulse” of contemporary culture and award the

prestigious Nobel Prizes, I wish to share this theme of social dialogue as the royal road towards a new culture. The pervasive growth of social media risks replacing dialogue with a welter of monologues, often aggressive in tone (cf. *Fratelli Tutti*, 200). Social dialogue, instead, “involves the ability to respect the other’s point of view” (ibid., 203) with sincerity and without deceit.

Dialogue is not synonymous with relativism. Indeed, society is all the more noble whenever it cultivates the search for truth and is rooted in fundamental truths (cf. *Fratelli Tutti*, 206-207), and especially when it acknowledges that “every human being possesses an inalienable dignity” (ibid., 213). Believers and nonbelievers alike can agree on this principle.

On this basis, we are together called to promote the culture of encounter. “Let us arm our children with the weapons of dialogue! Let us teach them to fight the good fight of the culture of encounter!” (*Fratelli Tutti*, 217).

Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you again for your visit. May God bless you and your work, your families and your country.
