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Audience with members of the Association of Italian Philanthropic Foundations and Institutions (ASSIFERO)

This morning, the Holy Father Francis received in audience, in the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the members of the Association of Italian Philanthropic Foundations and Institutions (ASSIFERO), to whom he addressed the following greeting:

Greeting of the Holy Father

Dear friends, good morning!

I thank the president, Dr. Stefania Mancini, for her words, and I greet you all, members of the ASSIFERO Association.

You requested this meeting on the twentieth anniversary of your Association, and in this way, I have been able to get to know you. I congratulate you for the work you have carried out in these years, and for the clearly Christian-inspired approach with which you have structured your activities.

As Dr. Mancini has just reminded us, you bring together various private foundations which, in Italy and abroad, are engaged in various fields, for the promotion of the person and the development of healthy and supportive social and economic models, to combining diverse skills and resources. Indeed, one of the first things that stands out about your work is precisely its richness and variety. You are of different origins, extractions and Christian denominations, you bring with you the heritage of spheres of activities, skills and working models of various types, and you focus your attention and your assistance on all kinds of situations and contexts. Yours is an “all-embracing” charity, which demands open-mindedness and a capacity for coordination; to use a Pauline image, as the members of one body (cf. *1 Cor 12:1-13*).

Therefore, I would like to recommend to you to pay particular attention, in your programmes, to three important

values that, moreover, you already have clearly in mind: first, *the promotion of the integral good of the person*, second, *listening to local communities* and, third, *closeness to the last among us*. With regard to closeness, do not forget that it is one of God's qualities: closeness, compassion and tenderness. This is how God is: close, compassionate and tender. They are the three "attitudes", so to speak, of God. This closeness leads you to compassion and tenderness.

First and foremost, *the promotion of the integral good of the person*, in his or her fundamental dimensions: material, intellectual, moral and spiritual. Indeed, it is crucial that material assistance aims to emancipate people, making them agents of their own growth, in the development of their abilities and their gifts, both at individual and community level. All this should be done in accordance with sound ethical principles, so that economic growth can occur in solidarity and justice. May you be inspired by the words of Jesus, who said: "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (*Jn 10:10*).

The second value: *listening to local communities*. You have spoken to me about this attention that you propose as a method: listening to local realities. It is very important, so that your intervention is not reduced to sporadic aid, but rather sows the seeds for the future where people live, in the situations Providence indicates to you (cf. *Lk 13:18-21*). The humility of listening, understood in this way, is a fundamental element of acting for the common good; even more so when it enables you to become spokespeople for the needs of the weakest in public institutions.

The third value: *closeness to the last*. There is a proverb that says that "a chain is only as strong as its weakest link". Being close to the last, stooping to tend to their wounds, taking charge of their needs, is to lay a good foundation in the construction of united and solid communities, for a better world and for a future of peace. It is Christ himself who comes towards us in the poor, to show us the way to the Kingdom of Heaven, he who "for our sake became poor, so that by his poverty we might become rich" (cf. *1 Cor 8:9*).

Dear friends, thank you for coming today, and above all for all the good that you do. I encourage you to keep going, always with enthusiasm and wisdom. I bless you from my heart. And I ask you, please, to pray for me. Thank you!
