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Message of the Holy Father to participants in the 97th session of the “Semaines Sociales de France”

The following is the Message – signed by Cardinal Secretary of State Pietro Parolin – sent by the Holy Father Francis to the participants in the 97th session of the “Semaines Sociales de France”, to take place from 24 to 26 November 2023 at the *Université Catholique de Lyon*:

Message

To the participants
at the *Semaines Sociales de France* Conference
LYON

I am pleased to join you in thought and prayer for the annual meeting of the *Semaines Sociales de France*. I send you warm greetings from His Holiness Pope Francis, who wishes you every success in your work.

Your gathering is taking place this year against the backdrop of a very worrying situation of international instability, which, in France too, demonstrates the need for social cohesion, fraternity and reconciliation between groups and communities. Today, more than ever, we understand the relevance of integral ecology, according to the magisterium of Pope Francis, which addresses the social and environmental crises simultaneously and urges us not to separate what is intimately linked.

In the Apostolic Exhortation *Laudate Deum*, published eight years after the Encyclical *Laudato si'*, the Holy Father emphasizes that “our responses have not been adequate, while the world in which we live is collapsing and may be nearing the breaking point” (2). He reminds us that, although a personal commitment to the protection of creation is an essential aspect of Christian life, insofar as it bears witness to faith in God the Creator and helps to generate a culture of respect for the environment, it is not enough to tackle the climate crisis we are currently experiencing. It is therefore necessary to begin “a new process marked by three requirements: that it be drastic, intense and count on the commitment of all” (*ibid.*, 59), involving both politics and

the mobilization “from below” of the various social actors and intermediary bodies.

In the light of *Fratelli tutti*, the invitation to construct a society inspired by sentiments of friendship and fraternity becomes a concrete proposal for exploring new forms of cooperation. Pope Francis welcomes the fact that “many groups and organizations within civil society help to compensate for the shortcomings of the international community, its lack of coordination in complex situations, and its lack of attention to fundamental human rights” (*ibid.*, 37).

In this sense, the Holy Father’s imminent participation in COP 28 in Dubai is testimony to his commitment that encourages all Catholics to mobilize with clear-sightedness and determination in the social sphere. Faith does not separate, but rather binds the Lord’s disciples more deeply to the destiny of humanity, of all living beings and of our common home.

“The novelty of the Gospel ... is a radical novelty, not a fleeting novelty”, said Pope Francis (*General Audience*, 4 August 2021). May your view of contemporary realities, enriched by the convergence of diverse skills and perspectives, support the Church of France in its mission. Only the newness of the Lord Jesus is radical: it shines out particularly among the poor, far from the logic of power, where the Kingdom of God is already changing minds and hearts and preparing our future. May your hope also be radical!

Pope Francis gladly imparts his Apostolic Blessing to each and every one of you.

Cardinal Pietro Parolin
Secretary of State of His Holiness
