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Audience with members of the Archconfraternity of Saints John the Baptist and the Evangelist of. the Knights of Malta, of Catanzaro

This morning, in the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the members of the Archconfraternity of Saints John the Baptist and the Evangelist of. the Knights of Malta, of Catanzaro.

The following are the words of greeting the Pope addressed to those present:

Greeting of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters, welcome!

I am pleased to meet you at the beginning of this new year, during which we are celebrating the Jubilee as a time of reconciliation and hope.

We have just celebrated Mary, Mother of God: she is the protectress of your confraternity, which remembers her with the name of Hodegetria, “she who shows the way”, that is, Jesus, who is the Way, the Truth and Life (cf. *Jn* 14:6). It is she who points to Jesus, always! Never herself, Jesus! The Hodegetria. Mary holds in her arms the Saviour born for us. Here is the event of love to which you bear witness adoring the Eucharist, serving your neighbour and walking in the history of your city. Therefore I would like to reflect briefly with you on these three verbs: to adore, to serve and to walk.

First of all, to *adore*. Your Confraternity gathers before the Blessed Sacrament. Especially in this Holy year, I invite you to make every effort to cultivate prayer, personal and community prayer. Let this be your strength, the strength that will constantly renew your ancient brotherhood. Fervour, in fact, preserves fraternity: indeed, from the Lord Jesus, who nourishes us with his life and sustains us with his Spirit, come all the gifts, the charisms, the fruits of good that make the Church fruitful and joyful.

The second action is to *serve*. When you take care of the poor, every time you visit the sick, while you are in the company of those who suffer, you serve the Lord (cf. *Mt* 25:40). There is a very close link between adoration and service, which we must never forget. Christ came into the world to serve (cf. *Mk* 10:45): you too, like branches joined to the Vine, extend His charity whenever you are close to the small and needy with compassion and tenderness. Do not forget this: compassion and tenderness to the small, to the poor. The three words that indicate how God is with us: closeness, compassion and tenderness. God is close to us, God is compassionate, God is tender. In this way, your witness of devotion to God and dedication to your brothers and sisters will shine for everyone along the way.

And the third verb is to *walk*, and it reminds us that Jesus, the Way, calls us to follow Him with perseverance, keeping the flame of faith alight during the earthly pilgrimage. In this regard, I address special thanks to you, as Bishop of Rome: indeed, your Confraternity offers the Pasqual candle to the Lateran Basilica every year, together with an offering for the Pope's charity. Thank you! Thank you very much!

Dear sisters and dear brothers, I urge you to continue with hope on the path of generosity, along which the Lord will always accompany you. I bless you and your families from my heart. And please, do not forget to pray for me. Thank you.