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The Holy Father's words to the Preacher of the Spiritual Exercises (Ariccia, 10 March 2017)

The following are the words of thanks the Holy Father addressed this morning to the Preacher of the Spiritual Exercises, Fr. Giulio Michelini, O.F.M., at the conclusion of the Spiritual Exercises in Ariccia.

The words of the Holy Father

I wish to thank you for the good you wished to do for us, and for the good you have done.

First of all, for having shown us as you are, natural, without presenting an "enhanced image". Natural. Without artifice. With all the baggage of your life: studies, publications, friends, parents, young friars whom you must take care of ... everything, everything. Thank you for being "normal".

Then, secondly, I wish to thank you for the work you have done, for how you have prepared. This means responsibility, taking things seriously. And thank you for all that you have given us. It is true: there is a mountain of things to meditate on, but St. Ignatius tells us that when one finds in the Exercises something that gives consolation or desolation, one must stop there and not go on. Certainly each one of us has found one or two, among all of this. And the rest does not go to waste: it remains, and will serve us another time. And perhaps the most important things, the strongest, say nothing to some people, and perhaps a little word, a little thing says more. Like that anecdote of the great Spanish preacher who, after a great well-prepared sermon, was approached by a man – a great public sinner – in tears, who asked for confession; he confessed, a cascade of sins and tears, sins and tears. The confessor, amazed – as he knew the life of this man – asked, "But tell me, when did you feel God touch your heart? With which word? ..." – "When you said: let's move on to another subject". [Laughter]. At times, the simplest words are those that help us, or the most complicated: to Lord gives the right word to each of us.

I thank you for this, and hope that you will continue to work for the Church, in the Church, in exegesis, in the many things the Church entrusts to you. But above all, I hope you will be a good friar.