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Eucharistic Concelebration with the Missionaries of Mercy

At midday today, at the Altar of the Cathedra in the Vatican Basilica, the Holy Father Francis presided over the Eucharistic Concelebration with the Missionaries of Mercy.

The following is the homily pronounced by the Pope after the proclamation of the Holy Gospel:

Homily of the Holy Father

We have heard in the Book of the Acts of the Apostles: “*With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus*” (Acts 4:33).

Everything starts from the Resurrection of Jesus: from it comes the testimony of the Apostles and, through this is generated the faith and the new life of the members of the community, with its frank evangelical style.

The readings of today’s Mass brings out these two inseparable aspects well: *personal rebirth* and *community life*. So, turning to you, dear brothers, I think of the ministry you carry out, starting from the Jubilee of Mercy. A ministry that moves in both these directions: at the service of the people, so they may be “*reborn from above*”, and at the service of the communities, so that they may live the commandment of love with joy and coherence.

Today the Word of God offers two indications that I would like to grasp for you, thinking precisely of your mission.

The Gospel recalls that those who are called to bear witness to the Resurrection of Christ *must themselves, in the first person, “be born from above”* (cf. *Jn 3: 7*). Otherwise one ends up becoming like Nicodemus who, despite being a teacher in Israel, did not understand the words of Jesus when He said that to “see the kingdom of God” we must “be born from above”, be born “of water and the Spirit” (cf. 3-5). Nicodemus did not understand the logic of God, which is the logic of grace, of mercy, so that those who become small are great, those who

become last are first, those who recognize themselves ill are healed. This means truly leaving the primacy to the Father, to Jesus and to the Holy Spirit in our life. Beware: it is not a question of becoming priests who are “invaded”, as if they were depositaries of some extraordinary charisma. No. Ordinary priests, simple, gentle, balanced, but able to let themselves be constantly regenerated by the Spirit, docile to His strength, inwardly free – above all by themselves – as they are moved by the “wind” of the Spirit Who blows where He wants (cf. *Jn* 3, 8).

The second indication concerns community service: to be priests capable of “*raising*” in the “*desert*” of the world the sign of salvation, that is, the Cross of Christ, as a source of conversion and renewal for the whole community and for the world itself (see *Jn* 3: 14-15). In particular, I would like to stress that the Lord Who died and rose again is the force that creates communion in the Church and, through the Church, in the whole of humanity. Jesus said before the Passion: “And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself” (*Jn* 12: 32). This strength of communion was manifested from the beginning in the community of Jerusalem where – as the Book of Acts attests – “all the believers were one in heart and mind” (4: 32). It was a communion that was made of the concrete sharing of goods, so that “they shared everything they had” (*ibid.*) And “there were no needy persons among them” (34). But this lifestyle of the community was also “contagious” to the outside: the living presence of the Risen Lord produces a force of attraction which, through the witness of the Church and through the various forms of proclamation of the Good News, tends to reach all, no-one excluded. Dear brothers, put your specific ministry of Missionaries of Mercy at the service of this dynamism. In fact, both the Church and the world today are in particular need of Mercy so that the unity desired by God in Christ may prevail over the negative action of the evil one who takes advantage of many current means, in themselves good, but which when misused, instead of uniting tend to divide. We are convinced that “unity is greater than conflict” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 228), but we also know that without mercy this principle does not have the strength to be implemented in the reality of life and history.

Dear brothers, may you leave this meeting with the joy of being confirmed in the ministry of Mercy. First of all confirmed in the grateful confidence of being the first to be called to be reborn always “from above”, from God’s love. And at the same time confirmed in the mission of offering to all the sign of Jesus “lifted up” from the ground, so that the community may be a sign and instrument of unity in the midst of the world.
