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Audience with the Poor Clare Sisters of the Saint Clare Monastery in Paganica, L'Aquila

This morning the Holy Father received in audience the Poor Clare Sisters of the Saint Clare Monastery in Paganica, L'Aquila

The following is the Pope's address to those present:

Address of the Holy Father

Dear sisters,

I am happy to welcome you and I greet each and every one of you from my heart. I thank you for the support you give me with your prayers, and in particular for the gift of the Easter candle you decorated for the Chapel of Casa Santa Marta. Through this symbol of Christ, light of the world, you are spiritually present at the celebrations held in that chapel.

Your community of Paganica, a hamlet of L'Aquila, experienced the tragedy of the 2009 earthquake, in which your Monastery was destroyed, Abbess Mother Gemma Antonucci died in the rubble, and other sisters were injured. However, God brought you out of that tragedy stronger and, like the grain of wheat that must die in order to bear fruit, so it was also for your monastic community. You experienced great pain, but also the loving care of your heavenly Father and the solidarity of so many people.

On that night you lost everything apart from God and fraternity. From these two steadfast points you set out again with courage. At first you settled in a temporary structure and, ten years after the earthquake, you returned to the rebuilt and restored monastery. Now your community is flourishing, made up of twelve sisters, all young. This is the message you have given to the people: in the face of tragedy, it is necessary to start afresh from God and from fraternal solidarity. Thank you so much for this!

Dear sisters, do not tire of being a praying and consoling presence to support the population, sorely tried by the terrible experience and still in need of comfort and encouragement. May the example of Blessed Antonia help you always to be poor and joyful women for love of the poor Christ. Faithful to the charism received from St Clare and St Francis, respond generously to the desire that God has placed in your hearts, living your lives as consecrated women in total adherence to the Gospel.

I thank you for this visit! I invoke upon your journey the light and strength of the Holy Spirit and I accompany you with the Apostolic Blessing which I impart to you from my heart. And please continue to pray for me and for the whole Church. Thank you!
