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Audience with members of the Cornelia de Lange Association

This morning the Holy Father Francis received in audience, in the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the members of the Cornelia de Lange Association, to whom he addressed the following greeting:

Greeting of the Holy Father

Dear friends of the Cornelia de Lange voluntary association!

I am glad to receive you and to welcome you. I greet, in particular, Mr. Vincenzo Placida, at the end of his long journey, which led him to Rome to raise public awareness of Cornelia de Lange syndrome. This rare genetic illness is the cause of discomfort and great difficulty for both sufferers and their families. I want to express my sympathy and understanding to them, encouraging them not to let the obstacles they encounter along the way bring them down.

I would like to express my appreciation to the volunteers of your Association, who caringly stand beside these most fragile of our brothers and sisters, supporting those who look after them. The culture of solidarity concretely expresses participation in building a fraternal society, at the centre of which is the human person. In volunteering, the fundamental dimension of the Christian image of God and man is involved: love of God and love of neighbour. Jesus, in the Gospel, invites us to love God with all our heart and our neighbour as we love ourselves (cf. *Mk* 12:29). It is God's charity that makes us recognize in others the brother or sister to be welcomed. And precisely for this reason, you volunteers, while carrying out charitable work, contribute to giving a more human and more Christian face to our society.

Be witnesses of goodness and tenderness! Continue serenely and strongly in your work, facing the difficulties that you may encounter with a spirit of unity and always placing the ultimate purpose of your commitment, that is, service to your neighbour, at the heart of everything you do. I accompany you with my prayer and my Blessing. And please, I ask you to pray for me. Thank you.