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Audience with the Orionine Family on the 150th anniversary of the birth of Saint Luigi Orione and the participants in the General Chapter of the Sons of Divine Providence

This morning, the Holy Father Francis received in audience a representation of the Orionine Families on the 150th anniversary of the birth of Saint Luigi Orione, and the participants in the General Chapter of the Sons of Divine Providence.

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

Address of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning and welcome!

I greet Don Tarcisio Gregorio Vieira, reconfirmed as Superior General of the Sons of Divine Providence, and all of you, dear members of the Orionine charismatic family. It is a "single plant with many branches", formed of men and women religious, secular consecrated and lay women, all nurtured by the same charism of Saint Luigi Orione, whose 150th anniversary of birth in Pontecurone, Alessandria, on 23 June 1872, we commemorate this year.

With you I bless the Lord, who from that seed – as the Gospel says – has made a great plant grow, which gives welcome, shelter and sustenance to so many people, especially the unhappiest and most in need. And while you give thanks and celebrate, feel the power of the living charism, feel the commitment that it takes to be followers and family members of a great witness of Christ's charity; the commitment of making present, with your life and your deeds, the fire of this charity in today's world, marked by individualism and consumerism, efficiency and appearances.

As Don Orione wrote at the beginning of the twentieth century: "We live in a century that is filled with coldness and death in the life of the spirit; all turned in on itself, it sees nothing but pleasures, vanity and passions and the life of this world, and no more". And he wondered: "Who will give life to this generation, dead to the life of God, if

not the breath of the charity of Jesus Christ? ... We must therefore ask God not for a spark of charity, ... but for a furnace of charity, to enflame us and renew this cold and frozen world, with the help and by the grace the Lord will give us" (*Writings* 20, 76-77).

You, Sons of Divine Providence, as the theme of your recently concluded General Chapter, chose an expression typical of the apostolic ardour of Don Orione: "Let us make the sign of the Cross and cast ourselves confidently into the fire of the new times for the good of the people" (*Writings*, 75, 242). It takes courage! Please, let the fire not remain only in your hearth and in your communities, nor only in your works, but may you "cast yourselves into the fire of the new times for the good of the people".

Jesus said of himself: "I came to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!" (*Lk* 12:49). The fire of Christ is a good fire: it is not to destroy, as James and John would have it when they asked: "Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" (*Lk* 9:54). No, it is not that fire. But Jesus rebukes the two brothers. His is a fire of love, a fire that ignites the heart of people, a fire that gives light, warms and vivifies.

To the extent that Christ's charity burns in us, your presence and your action become useful to God and to men, because – Saint Luigi wrote – "the cause of Christ and of the Church is only served by a great charity of life and works, charity opens the eyes to faith and warms hearts with love for God. Works of the heart and Christian charity are needed! And everyone will believe you" *Letters* I, 181; *Writings* 4, 280).

Justly, in the General Chapter, you placed the relationship with God, the heart of your identity, at the centre of renewal. The fire is nurtured by receiving it from God with the life of prayer, meditation of the Word, the grace of the Sacraments. Don Orione was a man of action and contemplation. Therefore, he exhorted: "Let us throw ourselves at the foot of the Tabernacle", and also, "Let us throw ourselves at the foot of the Cross", because "loving God and loving our brothers are two flames of one sacred fire (*Letters* II, 397).

Dear brothers and sisters of the Orionine Family, today being missionary disciples, sent by the Church, is not first and foremost a question of doing something, an activity; it is an apostolic identity continually nurtured in the fraternal life of the religious community or the family. "Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them" (*Mt* 18:20). It is important to care for the quality of community life, the relationships, common prayer: this is already apostolate, because it is witness. If there is coldness between us, or worse, judgement and gossip, what apostolate do we expect to carry out? Please, no gossip. Gossip is a woodworm, a woodworm that corrupts, a woodworm that kills the life of a community, of a religious order. No gossip. I know that it is not easy, conquering gossip is not easy, and some might ask: "But how can it be done?". There is a very good medicine, very good: bite your tongue. It will do you good!

The witness of love in the religious community and in the family is the confirmation of the Gospel proclamation, it is the "trial by fire". "A community that is beautiful, strong - these are Don Orione's words - and where there is full concord of hearts and peace, cannot but be dear, desirable and edifying to all" (*Letters* I, 418). And it also becomes attractive to new vocations.

Finally, I would like to return to that exhortation to "cast oneself into the fire of the new times". This requires us to look at today's world as apostles, that is, with discernment but with sympathy, without fear, without prejudice, with courage; to look at the world as God looks at it, feeling the sorrows, the joys, the hopes of humanity as our own. The guiding Word remains that of God to Moses: "I have observed the misery of my people [...]. I have come down to deliver them" (*Ex* 3:7-8). We must see the miseries of this world of ours as the reason for our apostolate and not as an obstacle. Your Founder used to say: "It is not enough to weep over the sadness of the times and men, and it is not enough to say: O Lord! O Lord! No regrets of a bygone age. No sad spirit, no closed spirit. Onward with serene and imperturbable industriousness". (*Writings* 79, 291). And no gossip, I repeat.

Our time asks us to open up to new frontiers, to discover new forms of mission. Let us look at Mary, Virgin of resourcefulness and caring, who left home in a hurry and set out to help her cousin Elizabeth. And there, in service, Mary had the confirmation of God's plan of providence. I like to pray to her as "Our Lady in haste": she

wastes no time, she goes and acts.

Dear brothers and sisters, thank you for coming, and above all for what you are and what you do. I bless all of you and your communities from my heart. And please, I ask you to pray for me. Thank you.
