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## Audience with the community of the Pontifical Latin American College

This morning, in the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the community of the Pontifical Latin American College.

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

### Address of the Holy Father

I am happy to be with all of you today, members of the family of the Pio Latin American College. These years that you are in Rome are a time of grace that the Lord is giving you to further your formation, not only intellectually and academically, but also to experience the richness and diversity of the universal Church. This richness and diversity are also typical of our Latin American peoples, where you will return to continue to be shepherds of the flock entrusted to you by the Church.

The first Christians also came from diverse peoples and cultures. It was the Holy Spirit, who descended upon them, who caused them to be "of one heart and soul" (*Acts 4:32*), to speak the same language - the language of love - and to be disciples and missionaries of Jesus to the ends of the earth (cf. *Mt 28:19*). Thinking of Andrew the Apostle, whose feast we celebrate this Wednesday, I would like to dwell on these two terms: *disciples* and *missionaries*.

In the Gospel of John we see that Andrew was one of Jesus' first disciples. In response to his eagerness to know who the Master was, and his invitation: "Come and see" (*Jn 1:39*), he went and saw where he lived and stayed with him that day. It was there that his life changed radically. Therefore, dear brothers and sisters, let us renew our daily encounter with the Lord, let us share His Word, let us remain in silence before him to hear what he says to us, to see what he does, how he feels, how he keeps silent, how he loves. Let us allow him to be the "Word" in our lives and, if you will allow me to use the image, let us allow him to "conjugate" in us and through us. Let us not prevent him from acting in our ministry in the first Person - let Jesus have an active voice in our every decision! We are his ministers, we belong to him and he called us to "be with him". This is what it means to

be his *disciples*.

Andrew's encounter with Jesus does not leave him calm, with his arms folded, but rather it transforms him; he was no longer the same as before, and he could only go and announce what he had experienced. And the first person he found to tell was his own brother Simon Peter: "We have found the Messiah" (*Jn 1:41*), and he took him to where Jesus was. In this way Andrew "made his debut" as a *missionary*. And our brothers and sisters are also waiting for us, especially those who have not yet experienced the love and mercy of the Lord, to announce the Good News of Jesus and to lead them to him. To go out, to move, to bring the joy of the Gospel, that is to be *missionaries*.

Mark, in his Gospel, summarizes Jesus' call to be disciples and missionaries. In the third chapter we read that he called the apostles "to be with him, and to be sent out to proclaim" (v. 14). To be with Jesus and to go out to proclaim him. Two verbs: "to be" and "to go out". This is the path of our life. It is a journey "back and forth", which has Jesus as its starting and finishing point. Let us not forget that "being" with Jesus and "going out" to proclaim him also means being with the poor, with migrants, with the sick, with prisoners, with the smallest, with the most forgotten in society, and sharing life with them and proclaiming to them God's unconditional love. Because Jesus is present in these most vulnerable brothers and sisters, there He awaits us in a special way (cf. *Mt 25:34-40*).

And do not forget to return to him, every night, after a long day - but beware, to him, not to the screen of a mobile phone. It hurts me a lot when I see a good, hard-working priest get tired and forget to go to the tabernacle, and go to sleep because he is tired. He is right, he has to sleep, but first say hello. Don't be rude... Or how many times do they escape to the screen of a mobile phone? The mobile screen overwhelms us with things. Please do not be addicted to that world of escapism. Don't be addicted. It is a series of steps that sap your strength. Be addicted to meeting Jesus, and he knows what we need and he has a word to say to us every time.

One thing I said in passing is that you are returning to be shepherds of the People of God. Please, never negotiate pastoral care. Pastors of the People of God, not clerics of state. Do not descend into clericalism, which is one of the worst perversions. Be very careful, clericalism is a form of spiritual worldliness. Clericalism is disfiguring, it is corrupt, and it leads you to a corruption, a stiff corruption, with an upturned nose, that takes you away from the people, that makes you forget the people you came from. Paul said to Timothy: "Remember your mother and your grandmother" (cf. *2 Tim 5-7*), in other words, go back to your roots, do not forget your mother and your grandmother. I say this to each one of you. Return to the flock from which you were taken... "I brought you out from behind the flock" (cf. *2 Sam 8*).

Please, every time you become more "exquisite" in the true sense of the word, that is, more distant from the people, every time you do that, you turn away from the grace of God and descend into the plague of clericalism. Pastors of the people, not clerics of state. Ask for the grace to know how to be always in front of, in the midst of and behind the people, involved with the people from whom Jesus took you.

And let us ask Our Lady of Guadalupe to help us on the path of "discipleship-apostleship" that configures us to her Son, to accompany us on this vital "back and forth" itinerary that starts from Jesus and goes to the brothers and sisters, to return with the brothers and sisters to meet Jesus. Let us ask the Apostle Andrew to intercede for us.

And once again, thank you for this visit. I wish you a good Roman journey; take all the good things you can find in Rome, the others no, leave them in Rome, they will be taken care of here, and please do not forget to pray for me. Thank you.

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