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Audience with participants in the conference of the “Chair of Hospitality”, organized by *Fraterna Domus*

This morning, in the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the participants in the training conference on the “Chair of Hospitality” organized by the *Fraterna Domus* of Sacrofano.

The following is the address delivered by the Pope during the meeting:

Address of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning and welcome!

I thank Sister Milena Pizziolo for her words, and I greet all of you who are participating in the training conference of the Chair of Hospitality, organized by the sisters of the *Fraterna Domus*. And I would like, first of all, to congratulate you, dear sisters, for this initiative, with which you have given your charism, your experience and also your structures to serve those who in various ways work in the field of hospitality: an area rich in values and spirituality, but also traversed by the dramas of our time. I thank you for your commitment; and I also thank the other associations, institutes, foundations and communities that collaborate with the Chair of Hospitality.

I share with you some reflections with reference to the Encyclical *Fratelli tutti* (FT).

Hospitality is one of the features that characterize what I have called “an open world” (cf. FT, Chapter III). The Encyclical is an appeal to “envisage and engender an open world” (cf. *ibid.*), and you respond to this appeal: you do so with the work you carry out every day, without fuss, without turning on the spotlight, and you do so also with this training meetings. Indeed, to be able to work, to be able to *engender* hospitality, it is necessary also to *envisage* hospitality. Here is the great value of moments like the one you are living, in which together you explore the various aspects: anthropological, ethical, religious, historical, and so on. But your “Chair” is not a sterile laboratory in which abstract formulas are developed; it is a moment of reflection inseparable from field work. While you listen and study, you remain aware of faces, stories, real problems, and you share them with the

speakers and in the working groups.

Let us return to the Encyclical. There are two passages that seem to me to be particularly interesting to you. I will concentrate on these.

The first is found in the third chapter, under the title of “A love ever more open”. I quote: “Love impels us towards universal communion. No one can mature or find fulfilment by withdrawing from others. By its very nature, love calls for growth in openness and *the ability to accept others* as part of a continuing adventure that makes every periphery converge in a greater sense of mutual belonging. As Jesus told us: ‘You are all brothers’ (Mt 23:8)” (FT, 95). Hospitality is an expression of love, of that dynamism of openness that drives us to pay attention to the other, to seek out the best for his or her life (cf. FT, 97-98). On this aspect of love, the fundamental reference is Benedict XVI’s first Encyclical, *Deus caritas est* (25 December 2005).

The second passage of *Fratelli tutti* that I propose to you is number 141. I quote in full: “The true worth of the different countries of our world is measured by their ability to think not simply as a country but also as part of the larger human family. This is seen especially in times of crisis. Narrow forms of nationalism are an extreme expression of an inability to grasp the meaning of this gratuitousness. They err in thinking that they can develop on their own, heedless of the ruin of others, that by closing their doors to others they will be better protected. Immigrants are seen as usurpers who have nothing to offer. This leads to the simplistic belief that the poor are dangerous and useless, while the powerful are generous benefactors. Only a social and political culture that readily and ‘gratuitously’ welcomes others will have a future”. We are in the fourth chapter, entitled “A gratuitousness open to others”, where it talks about a “gratuitousness that welcomes” (cf. nos. 139-141). The aspect of gratuitousness is essential to generate fraternity and social friendship. For you, I emphasize the final phrase: “Only a social and political culture that readily and ‘gratuitously’ welcomes others will have a future” (no. 141). Gratuitous welcome. Often, we talk about the contribution that migrants give or can give to the society that welcomes them. This is true and it is important. But the fundamental criterion does not lie in the usefulness of the person, but in the value in itself that he or she represents. The other deserves to be welcomed not so much for what he has, or what he can give, but for what he is.

Dear brothers and sisters, I leave you with these points for reflection, and I encourage you to continue on your path of formation, so that you can live hospitality and promote a culture of welcoming in an ever better way. May Our Lady accompany you. From my heart I bless you, and I ask you to please pray for me. Thank you!
