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Audience with the Delegation for the presentation of the “È Giornalismo” Prize

This morning, the Holy Father Francis received in audience a delegation for the presentation of the “È Giornalismo” Prize, to whom he delivered the following address:

Address of the Holy Father

Dear friends, welcome!

I greet you and thank you for this meeting and for the awarding of the “È Giornalismo” Prize. You must know that, even before becoming bishop of Rome, I used to decline the offer of awards. I never received any, I did not want to. And I have continued to do so even as Pope. There is, however, one reason that prompted me to accept yours, and that is the urgency of constructive communication, which fosters the culture of encounter and not of confrontation; the culture of peace and not of war; the culture of openness to the other and not of prejudice. You are all distinguished exponents of Italian journalism. Allow me, then, to confide in you a hope and also to frankly address a request for help. But I am not asking you for money, rest assured!

The hope is this: that today, in a time in which everyone seems to comment on everything, even regardless of the facts and often even before being informed, we rediscover and return to cultivating more the *principle of reality* - reality is superior to the idea, always -: the reality of facts, the dynamism of facts; which are never static and always evolve, towards good or evil, so as not to run the risk of the information society turning into the disinformation society. Disinformation is one of the sins of journalism, of which there are four: disinformation, when journalism does not inform or informs badly; slander (sometimes this is used); defamation, which is different from slander but destroys; and the fourth is coprophilia, that is, the love of scandal, of filth; scandal sells. Disinformation is the first of the sins, the mistakes – let’s say - of journalism.

To do this, however, we need to spread a culture of encounter, a culture of dialogue, a culture of listening to the other and his or her reasons. Digital culture has brought us so many new possibilities for exchange, but it also risks turning communication into slogans. No, communication is always back and forth. I speak, I listen, and I

respond, but always dialogue. It is not a slogan. I am concerned, for example, about the manipulations of those who interestingly propagate fake news to steer public opinion. Please, let us not give in to the logic of opposition, let us not be influenced by the language of hatred. At the dramatic juncture that Europe is experiencing, with the continuation of the war in Ukraine, we are summoned to a reawakening of responsibility. My hope is that space will be given to the voices of peace, to those who are committed to putting an end to this as to so many other conflicts, to those who do not surrender to the “cainist” logic of war but continue to believe, despite everything, in the logic of peace, the logic of dialogue, the logic of diplomacy.

And now I come to the request for help. Precisely at this time, when there is much talk and little listening, and when the sense of the common good is in danger of weakening, the Church as a whole has embarked on a journey to rediscover the word *together*. We must rediscover the word *together*. Walk *together*. Question *together*. Take responsibility *together* for community discernment, which for us is prayer, as the first Apostles did: this is *synodality*, which we would like to make a daily habit in all its expressions. Precisely for this purpose, in just over a month, bishops and lay people from all over the world will meet here in Rome for a *Synod on synodality*: listening *together*, discerning *together*, praying *together*. The word *together* is very important. We are in a culture of exclusion, which is a kind of communication capitalism. Perhaps the usual prayer of this exclusion is: “I thank you, Lord, because I am not like that, I am not like that, I am not...”: they exclude themselves. We must thank the Lord for so many good things!

I am well aware that speaking of a “*Synod on Synodality*” may seem something abstruse, self-referential, excessively technical, of little interest to the general public. But what has happened over the past year, which will continue with the assembly next October and then with the second stage of *Synod 2024*, is something truly important for the Church. It is a journey that Saint Paul VI began at the end of the Council, when he created the Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops, because he had realised that in the Western Church synodality had disappeared, whereas in the Eastern Church they have this dimension. And this years-long journey - 60 years - is bearing great fruit. Please, let us get used to listening to each other, to talking, not cutting our heads off for a word. To listen, to discuss in a mature way. This is a grace we all need in order to move forward. And it is something the Church today offers the world, a world so often so incapable of making decisions, even when our very survival is at stake. We are trying to learn a new way of living relationships, listening to one another to hear and follow the voice of the Spirit. We have opened our doors, we have offered everyone the opportunity to participate, we have taken into account everyone's needs and suggestions. We want to contribute together to build the Church where everyone feels at home, where no-one is excluded. That word of the Gospel that is so important: *everyone*. Everyone, everyone: there are no first-, second- or third-class Catholics, no. All together. Everyone. It is the Lord's invitation.

Therefore I dare to ask you, the experts of journalism, for help: help me to narrate this process for what it really is, leaving behind the logic of slogans and pre-packaged stories. No: reality. Someone said: “The only truth is reality”. Yes, reality. We will all benefit from this, and I am sure that this too “is journalism”, “è giornalismo”!

Dear friends, once again I thank you for this meeting, for what it means with regard to our common commitment to truth and peace. I entrust you all to the intercession of Mary, and please, do not forget to pray for me!
