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BOLLETTINO

SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

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Audience with a delegation of young people from the “Fraternité Missionnaire des Cités”;

This morning, the Holy Father Francis received in audience a delegation of young people from the *Fraternité missionnaire des Cités*.

The following is the text of the greeting prepared by the Pope for the occasion and handed to those present:

Greeting of the Holy Father

[*Merci beaucoup pour votre visite. Je suis heureux de vous recevoir* – Thank you very much for your visit. I am glad to welcome you.

This is the address I will give to you I will hand it out, so you have it in writing.

And I thank you very much for this visit, for this joyful attitude. Because it seems that you cannot speak without singing! And that you cannot sing without moving! That is, the word becomes dance. This is interesting!]

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning and welcome!

I am happy to meet you, members of the *Fraternité missionnaire des Cités*, during your pilgrimage to Rome. You have come to be spiritually replenished at the tombs of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, to draw from the living wellspring of the Church the love of Christ which is given ceaselessly to all men and women. May the Holy Spirit, with the example and intercession of these two pillars of the Church, revive in you the generous and missionary zeal of the early Church.

As we are still immersed in the light of Christmas, I invite you to contemplate the Nativity scene. We see a

simple and poor place, a periphery, a *banlieue* of that time. The shepherds who came to the crib are marginalized people with a bad reputation. And yet the Gospel of salvation is announced to them first. They are poor but they have a ready heart. This is your experience too. And you do not have to go very far, in your service to the heart of cities, to discover the existential peripheries of our societies, which more often than not are close at hand, in your area, at the street corner, on the same floor of the building. It is up to you to bring the message that was given to the shepherds: "Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people" (*Lk 2:10*). Therefore, do not be afraid of leaving behind your securities to be able to share your daily life with your brothers and sisters. Among them too, many have a ready heart and are unknowingly awaiting the good news.

Dear friends, I invite you to live fraternity generously in the midst of your neighbourhoods, an openness of hearts, hands, and ears, for a sincere welcome. Fraternity is the leaven of peace that all peripheries need: it enables each person to feel accepted as they are, wherever they are. I urge you, in every encounter you make, to discover in your brothers and sisters the presence of the Lord Jesus, and to show the presence of a compassionate God, a God who wants to express Himself and to act through your deeds, your words, your simple presence; a patient God who moves in step with every person, with their wounds, their rebellions, their anger. I also know how violence, indifference and hatred can sometimes blight neighbourhoods: today you have the courageous and necessary mission of bringing God's closeness, compassion and tenderness to people who are often deprived of dignity and love.

Dear brothers and sisters, thank you for what you do: keep going! I entrust every one of you and all the members of your Fraternity to the intercession of the Virgin Mary, and I bless you from my heart. Please, do not forget to pray for me. Thank you.
