



Speech of Pope Francois to the Institutes of the Prado

Sala del Concistoro

Roma, 7th of April 2018

Dear brothers and sisters,

I am pleased to welcome you on the occasion of your pilgrimage to Rome, as family members, committed to give daily life in tow and the example of Father Antoine Chevrier of helping the poorest. This meeting gives me the opportunity to thank the Lord for the ground covered by the time in which your blessed founder, struck by poverty of the most disenfranchised of his time, he decided to make himself close to them so they could know and love Jesus Christ. Since then the plant was admirably developed: you are now a beautiful family of priests, nuns and lay women religious, distributed in various Countries, inhabited by the same love of Jesus who became poor among the poor, and from the same ardor to evangelize.

Our age knows, also, its material and spiritual poverty, old and new, and there are many, all around us, those who experience suffering, injuries, miseries and anxieties of all kinds. They are very often churched, and completely ignore the joy and consolation coming from the Gospel. The Mission in their midst is immense and the mother church is happy to have the support of the disciples of Father Chevrier. I can't, in fact, endorse and encourage the pastoral action that you carry on according to the charism of your institutes, a charism that touches me personally and that is at the heart of the missionary renewal that the whole Church is named; Why is there an "intimate connection between evangelization and human advancement, which must necessarily be expressed and developed throughout the work of evangelization" (. apostolic exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, 178).

The Holy Pope John Paul II, on the occasion of the beatification of Father Chevrier, in 1986 in Lyon, we had suggested several guidelines, which you know well, to strengthen your dynamism, and for my part I can only renew them. To resume only one, he asked you: "talk about Jesus Christ with the same intensity of faith by Father Chevrier. [...] The poor have a right that we are talking about them to Jesus Christ. Are entitled to the Gospel and to the totality of the Gospel "(address to the Institute on October 7, 1986). I like to recall that the great majority of the poor has a special opening to the faith; they need God, spiritual and lack of attention towards them is the worst discrimination: "the preferential option for the poor must be reflected mainly in privileged and priority attention religious" (*Evangelii gaudium*, 200).

Dear brothers and sisters, I invite you to return continually to the magnificent figure of your founder, to ponder his life, asking for his intercession. The spiritual experience that he has intensely lived – an immense compassion for the poor, understanding and sharing their sufferings and at the same time, a contemplation of the disrobing of Christ who became one of them – was the source of the his apostolic zeal. And it will be also your missionary dynamism.

The Holy Spirit enlighten you on the streets is calling you to go; strengthen you in facing the challenges and difficulties. Entrusting your institutes and all their members to the intercession of blessed Antoine Chevrier, pray to the Virgin Mary to keep them under her motherly protection, and I cordially impart my Apostolic blessing.