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Audience with the Board of Directors of the Knights of Columbus, 10.02.2020

This morning the Holy Father Francis received in audience the members of the Board of Directors of the Knights of Columbus on the occasion of their annual pilgrimage to Rome, and to celebrate the centenary of the birth of the Foundation.

The following is the greeting the Pope addressed to those present:

Greeting of the Holy Father

Dear friends,

I offer you a warm welcome on the occasion of your pilgrimage to Rome in this year that marks the centennial of the charitable activity of the Knights of Columbus in this city.

In fact, it was one hundred years ago that my predecessor Pope Benedict XV invited the Knights of Columbus to provide humanitarian aid to young people and others in Rome following the terrible conflict of the First World War. The Knights responded generously, establishing sports centres for youth that quickly became places for education, catechesis and the distribution of food and other essentials so needed at that time. In this way, your Order proved faithful to the vision of your founder, Venerable Michael McGivney, who was inspired by the principles of Christian charity and fraternity to assist those most in need.

Today the Knights of Columbus continue their work of evangelical charity and fraternity in a variety of fields. I think in particular of your faithful witness to the sacredness and dignity of human life, evident at both the local and national levels. This conviction has also led the Knights of Columbus to aid, both materially and spiritually, those Christian communities in the Middle East that are suffering the effects of violence, war and poverty. I thank all the members of your Order for seeing in our persecuted and displaced brothers and sisters of that region neighbours for whom you are a sign of God's infinite love.

Since its foundation, the Knights of Columbus has demonstrated its unswerving devotion to the Successor of Peter. The establishment of the *Vicarius Christi* Fund is a testimony to this devotion, as well as to the desire of the Knights to share in the Pope's solicitude for all the Churches and in his universal mission of charity. In our world, marked by divisions and inequalities, the generous commitment of your Order to serve all in need offers, especially to young people, an important inspiration to overcome a globalization of indifference and build together a more just and inclusive society.

Dear brothers and sisters, with these thoughts and sentiments, I entrust you to the loving intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary. I offer my prayers for the members of the Knights of Columbus and their families, and for the good works accomplished by the local Councils worldwide. To all of you present here and to your loved ones, I impart my heartfelt blessing, and I ask you, please, to pray for me.

Thank you!

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