



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS
TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE ASSEMBLY
OF THE ITALIAN FEDERATION OF SPIRITUAL EXERCISES (FIES)***

Clementine Hall

Monday, 3 March 2014

Your Eminence, Your Excellency, Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I meet with you gladly on the occasion of this anniversary. I greet the President, I greet him and also thank him for his words. I greet the Counsellors, the Delegates and all those present.

This important anniversary gives you the propitious occasion to make an evaluation, to reflect on your history, recalling its origins and reading the new signs of the times. Therefore, it is good to recall the objective of the Federation, which is “to make the Spiritual Exercises known, understood as a intense experience of God, in a climate of listening to the Word directed to an ever more total conversion and donation to Christ and to the Church” (Article 2).

The theme you chose for your Assembly: “Enamored of spiritual beauty to spread the fragrance of Christ” (cf. 2 Cor 2:14), expresses the conviction proposed by the Spiritual Exercises, which means to invite to an experience of God, of His love and of His beauty. He who lives the Exercises in a genuine way experiences attraction, is fascinated by God, and returns renewed, transfigured to ordinary life, to the ministry, to daily relations, bearing within him the fragrance of Christ.

The men and women of today need to encounter God, to know Him not just “by the hearing of the ear (cf. Job 42:5). Your service is totally oriented to this, and you do it by offering space and time for intense listening of His Word in silence and in prayer. Privileged places for such a spiritual experience are the Retreat Houses, directed to this end, supported and provided with appropriate personnel. I encourage the Pastors of the different communities to take care that Retreat Houses are not lacking, where well-formed staff and qualified preachers, gifted with doctrinal and spiritual quality, are true teachers of the spirit. However, we must never forget that the protagonist of the

spiritual life is the Holy Spirit. He sustains our every initiative of goodness and prayer.

Dear friends, a good course of Spiritual Exercises contributes to renew in the participant an unconditional adherence to Christ, and helps him/her to understand that prayer is the irreplaceable means of union with Him crucified: *pone me iuxta te!* I thank you for the valuable service that you render the Church, so that the practice of the Spiritual Exercises may be spread, supported and enhanced. May Our Lady assist you always in this work. For my part, I ask you to pray for me, and I invoke upon you all an abundance of heavenly blessings.