

Castel Gandolfo, 24 March 2023

**Congress for Adherents s 2023
“Weaving change”**

Dear friends,

how I would have loved to be with you in Castel Gandolfo, to take part in your long-awaited congress and to personally greet each and every one of you.

As you know, I am in Munich for a meeting of 'Together for Europe', but I wholeheartedly wish to reach out to you with this written message to express all my gratitude, esteem and affection.

I would have loved to listen to your experiences, to dialogue with you, to participate in your challenges, in the projects in which you are involved, to rejoice together in the fruits that you are sharing these days and which testify to your passion in giving your lives for your brothers and sisters in so many parts of the world, in the name of the charism of unity.

I look forward to hearing about what you have done in these days.

I would now like to imagine myself sitting among you, in a large living room, and, as one does in a family, simply tell you what I have been living s recently.

In the past few months I have had a series of important appointments, concerning the synodal path of the Catholic Church and about the journey with other ecclesial Movements and New Communities. I have experienced the vitality of the Church and had the opportunity to meet Pope Francis personally. He spoke to us with an open heart, telling us what is closest to his heart for the Church and the world. All this was a source of great joy for me, but it also inspired within me a profound call to live with an even greater passion for unity; to put the words of the Gospel into practice in order to be a credible witness in this suffering humanity that has lost hope.

There are two expressions that accompany me at this time: we must know how to **take risks, out of love!**

And who more than you adherents, who carry in your DNA the freedom to love, is capable of risking freely for others?

Perhaps you were also connected when we recently gathered as a family, even if scattered around the world to participate in the link-up. It was a roundup of beautiful experiences, both personal and of groups, testimonies of the Gospel: in the various environments and countries ravaged by war and the natural disasters we have heard about or experienced first-hand.

And in Chiara's words there was a strong call not to allow ourselves to be distracted, but to give a solemn change of direction, to root ourselves in God, in the Only Good.

How much pain whole peoples are experiencing!!! Every day the images of those who have lost everything, through earthquakes, shipwrecks or the tragedy of war and violence grieve us deeply and challenge us.

Already in 1949 Chiara looked at **Jesus in his forsakenness** and read in His cry a programme of life, seeking Him, His face, in all the most painful situations, and even more so today it is always He who inspires us how to live this complex time.

With Jesus forsaken, we are called not only to embrace our own sufferings and limitations, asking forgiveness for our failures, but we are challenged to seek Him in the humanity that resembles Him. Therefore, every devastated place is ours, every wound a brother or sister suffers is ours, so is the pain of those who ask us to listen or help.

More than ever, the world is looking for people it can trust, people who are ready to risk for a greater good, for a more fraternal humanity. This is an appeal that calls on each one of us not to shy away, but rather urges us to give the best of ourselves.

In this sense, the title of your congress could not have been more apt!

'Weaving change': it seems to me that this expression encapsulates a vitally important programme for each of us and for humanity as a whole.

Weaving is a patient, constant process that, to be completed, requires the interweaving of many threads that, together, make up a firm and lasting fabric. The change that the world urgently needs requires such weaving: a network made up of people who are both strong and flexible, who know how to welcome everyone, who know how to open their minds and hearts to the greatest diversity. It needs people who know how to work with everyone, even those who think differently from them, but with whom they share the fundamental values of peace, justice, and dignity for all.

As you know I come from a country that is suffering and that has not yet seen the dawn of a lasting peace, which is why I would like to convey to you the passion that I have at heart to bring about 'change' in moving towards a world where peoples recognise each other as brothers and sisters where they practise the reciprocity of solidarity and are not crushed by violence. I think of a humanity that is 'family', because people recognise themselves as daughters and sons of one Father. It is beautiful to think that Chiara referred to the **adherents as the beautiful crown of the tree of the Movement**, because it presents itself to the world with the most varied flowers and fruits of the life of the Gospel.

My wish is that you will all be like this!!!

I pray that this congress will root all of you in a strong experience of God, giving you the joy of being part of a large family, like knots in a net of love that embraces and consoles the world.

