

Most Holy Father,

We thank you from the bottom of our hearts for granting us this audience! It is a great honor and joy for us to be able to meet you this morning.

Yesterday we opened our symposium, with the eloquent title "In the Footsteps of Cardinal L.J. Suenens: The Holy Spirit, Mary and the Church." It is a symposium on evangelization.

We send you the cordial greetings of Cardinal De Kesel, who should have accompanied us, but who - for health reasons - had to give up participating in our symposium.

#### (1. Introduction)

In these days of Easter, when the Church reminds us that we must bear witness to the risen Christ, we remember Cardinal Suenens, who was a fervent witness to Christ.

Our symposium is organized by the Belgian Pontifical College in Rome, under the high patronage of the Belgian Embassy to the Holy See, in collaboration with the Friends of the FIAT Association.

Allow me, Holy Father, to briefly introduce you to this association, which has taken on the spiritual heritage of Cardinal Suenens and the Servant of God Veronica O'Brien, both of whom were close to King Baudouin.

#### (2. The Fiat Association)

Evangelization was the passion of Cardinal Suenens, a passion that Veronica O'Brien shared. Three stars illuminated their lives: the Holy Spirit, Mary and the Church.

Living the Gospel under this constellation - the Holy Spirit, Mary and the Church - is what Cardinal Suenens and Veronica O'Brien have passed on to us as a legacy, so that we may pass it on in turn! This is the mission of the FIAT Association, founded by Veronica O'Brien, with the support of Cardinal Suenens. The fact that this association still exists after forty years is proof that this heritage has a future! Cardinal De Kesel will soon open the cause (of beatification) of Veronica O'Brien.

The FIAT Association is part of the "current of grace" that is the Charismatic Renewal and is in line with the major orientations that you have given to CHARIS.

#### (3. Fiat)

Cardinal Suenens and Veronica O'Brien met for the first time in Paris, in the premises of the Legion of Mary, on July 7, 1947, almost 75 years ago! About that first meeting, the cardinal noted in his recollections a revealing detail:

"I noticed that she was wearing a ring on her finger with a dove, symbol of the Holy Spirit, covering with its wings a diamond, symbol of Mary. This was in keeping with my own episcopal motto: In the Holy Spirit, with Mary.

During the conversation, she spoke of union with Mary as an opening to the Holy Spirit. I immediately perceived that she was speaking from experience, with a rare depth" (*The Hidden Hand of God*, p. 87).

The image of the Holy Spirit covering Mary with his wings refers to the story of the Annunciation, to Mary who responded to the angel Gabriel who had announced that the Holy Spirit would come upon her: *Fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum* (Lk 1:38). *Fiat*, this little word summarizes the spirituality of our association. We make our own the fiat of Mary, her unconditional YES to the Father, in order to be permeable to the action of the Holy Spirit, who - and I quote Cardinal Suenens - "He makes the presence of Jesus reality and forms him in us" (*The Holy Spirit, Life-Breath of the Church*, Vol. I, p. 209).

#### (4. Conclusion)

Cardinal Suenens was - here in Rome - titular of the Basilica of *San Pietro in Vincoli*. At the Second Vatican Council, as moderator, he played a very important role. He loved Rome and especially the successive bishops of this city, the popes he had known and frequented: Pius XII, Saint John XXIII, Saint Paul VI, Saint John Paul II. Like him, Most Holy Father, we recognize in you, the Bishop of Rome, the successor of Saint Peter. Therefore, your words will find in our hearts "a good soil" (Mt 13:8,23).

Thank you, Most Holy Father, for all that you do! And be assured that we are praying for you! And Happy Name Day.

Vatican City, April 23, 2022

Father Frederic Testaert O.Praem, Accompanist of the FIAT Association

#### SPEECH OF THE HOLY FATHER

To the FIAT Association

(April 23, 2022)

Dear friends,

I welcome you on the occasion of the symposium you are organizing on the figure of Cardinal Suenens. I thank Father Testaert for his kind words. I greet everyone with affection and, through you, I express my spiritual closeness to all the members of your Association.

With you, I thank the Lord for the work of Cardinal Suenens and Veronica O'Brien which continues today in your apostolate. In fidelity to the evangelical intuitions of your apostolate. In fidelity to the evangelical intuitions of your founders, you have committed yourselves to share the Gospel with every person that Providence puts on your path.

Today the question of evangelization is at the heart of the Church's mission. More than ever, we are all challenged to be protagonists of a Church on the move, under the impulse of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, "an evangelization done with the Spirit is an evangelization with the Holy Spirit, because he is the soul of the evangelizing Church" (*Evangelii gaudium*, n. 261).

In a world that is becoming more and more secularized, we need disciples who are convinced in their profession of faith and capable of transmitting the flame of hope to the men and women of this time. The tragedies that we are experiencing at the moment, especially the war in Ukraine so close to us, remind us of the urgency of a civilization of love. In the eyes of our brothers and sisters, victims of the horrors of war, we read the deep and pressing need for a life marked by dignity, peace and love. Like the Virgin Mary, we must unceasingly cultivate the missionary spirit to be close to those who suffer, opening our hearts to them. We must walk with them, fight with them for their human dignity, and spread the fragrance of God's love everywhere. "With the Holy Spirit, there is always Mary in the midst of the people. She was with the disciples to invoke him (cf. Acts 1:14), and thus she made possible the missionary explosion that occurred at Pentecost. She is the Mother of the Evangelizer and without her we cannot fully understand the spirit of the new evangelization" (*Evangelii gaudium*, n. 284).

Our common home is shaken by multiple crises. That is why we need to build a humanity, a society of fraternal and life-giving relationships. In fact, "actions spring from a union that makes us reach out more and more to the other. The love of the other for himself leads us to seek the best for his life. Only by cultivating this kind of relationship will we make possible an inclusive social friendship and a

fraternity open to all" (Enc. *Fratelli tutti*, n. 94). I therefore invite you to be witnesses, witnesses of the mercy, tenderness and goodness of God.

Dear friends, the Church trusts you. By your words, your actions and your witness, give a strong message to our world, which is lacking in humanity. May you drink, through prayer and your mission, from the source of goodness and truth, and find in communion with the dead and risen Christ the strength to look at the world with positive eyes, with love, with hope, with compassion and tenderness, being particularly attentive to the disadvantaged and marginalized.

I trust each of you who participate in the symposium and all the members of the Fiat Association. I bless you and your families with my heart. And, please remember to pray for me. Thank you for your prayers!