

Waarde en onschendbaarheid van het menselijk leven

Paus Franciscus
25 maart 2020

Beste broeders en zusters, goedemorgen!

Vijfentwintig jaar geleden, op dezelfde datum van 25 maart, die in de Kerk het plechtige feest van de Aankondiging van de Heer is, heeft de heilige Johannes Paulus II de Encycliek *Evangelium Vitae* uitgevaardigd over de waarde en onschendbaarheid van het menselijk leven.

De band tussen de Aankondiging en het “Evangelie van het leven” is sterk en diep. De heilige Johannes Paulus benadrukt dat in zijn Encycliek. Op onze dagen hernieuwen we dit onderricht in de context van een pandemie die een bedreiging vormt voor het menselijk leven en de wereldeconomie. Een situatie die de woorden waarmee de encycliek begint nog indringender maakt: “Het evangelie van het leven behoort tot de kern van Jezus’ boodschap. Dag na dag ontvangt de Kerk het met liefde en moet zij het moedig en trouw als goed nieuws voor de mensen van alle tijden en culturen verkondigen.” [1: H. Paus Johannes Paulus II, Encycliek, *Over de waarde en de onaantastbaarheid van het menselijk leven, Evangelium Vitae* (25 mrt 1995), 1: Het Evangelie van het Leven staat in het hart van de boodschap van Jezus. Dagelijks door de Kerk met liefde ontvangen, moet zij met moedige trouw verkondigd worden als het goede nieuws aan de mensen van ieder tijdperk en elke ...]

Zoals elke verkondiging van het Evangelie moet ook hiervan in de eerste plaats getuigenis worden gegeven. En ik denk met dankbaarheid aan het stille getuigenis van zoveel mensen die op verschillende manieren hun best doen om zieken, bejaarden, eenzamen en behoeftigen te dienen. Ze brengen het Evangelie van het leven in praktijk, zoals Maria die, nadat ze de aankondiging van de engel had vernomen, haar nicht Elizabeth ging helpen die het nodig had.

In feite is het leven dat we moeten bevorderen en verdedigen geen abstract begrip. Het wordt altijd zichtbaar in een persoon van vlees en bloed: een pas verwekt kind, een arme verschoppeling, een zieke die alleen en ontmoedigd is of terminaal, iemand die zijn baan kwijt is of geen werk kan vinden, een afgewezen migrant verbannen in een ghetto... Het leven openbaart zich concreet in mensen.

Ieder mens is door God geroepen om van de volheid van het leven te genieten. Omdat elke mens is toevertrouwd aan de moederlijke zorg van de Kerk, kan het niet anders dan dat iedere bedreiging van de menselijke waardigheid en het leven in haar hart, in haar moederlijke “binnenste” wordt gevoeld. De verdediging van het leven is voor de Kerk geen ideologie, het is een werkelijkheid, een menselijke werkelijkheid waarbij alle christenen betrokken zijn, precies omdat ze Christenen zijn en omdat ze mensen zijn.

De aanslagen op de waardigheid en het leven van de mensen gaan helaas in onze tijd nog steeds verder, in het tijdperk van de Universele Rechten van de Mens. Meer nog, we staan voor nieuwe bedreigingen en nieuwe slavernijen, en de wetgeving beschermt niet steeds de zwakste en meest kwetsbare mensen.

De boodschap van de Encycliek *Evangelium Vitae* is dus meer dan ooit actueel. Naast noodsituaties, zoals die we nu meemaken, is het een kwestie van handelen op cultureel en educatief vlak. Het komt erop aan een houding van solidariteit, zorg en aanvaarding over te brengen aan de toekomstige generaties, in het besef dat de cultuur van het leven niet het exclusieve erfgoed van Christenen is, maar eigen is aan allen die werken aan de opbouw van broederlijke relaties en de waarde erkennen van ieder mens, zelfs wanneer die kwetsbaar is en lijdt.

Beste broeders en zusters, elk menselijk leven, enig en onherhaalbaar, is op zich waardevol en van onschatbare

waarde. Dit moet altijd opnieuw worden verkondigd, met de moed van het woord en de moed van de actie. Het is een oproep tot broederlijke liefde voor de grote mensenfamilie en voor elk van haar leden.

Daarom herhaal ik met hernieuwde overtuiging de oproep van de heilige Johannes Paulus II die vijftwintig jaar geleden deze encycliek schreef: "respecteer, verdedig, bemin en dien het leven, ieder menselijk leven! Alleen op die weg zul je gerechtigheid, ontwikkeling, echte vrijheid, vrede en geluk vinden!" [2: H. Paus Johannes Paulus II, Encycliek, Over de waarde en de onaantastbaarheid van het menselijk leven, Evangelium Vitae (25 mrt 1995), 5 "Aan het probleem van de bedreigingen van het menselijk leven in onze tijd was het Buitengewoon Consistorie van de kardinalen gewijd, dat plaatsvond in Rome van 4 tot 7 april 1991. Na een uitvoerige en diepgaande bespreking van het probleem ...]

Overgenomen met toestemming van RK Documenten

Ethiek van Artificiële Intelligentie

Address prepared by Pope Francis, read by H.E. Archbishop Paglia, President of the Pontifical Academy for Life

28 February 2020

Distinguished Authorities, Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I offer you a cordial greeting on the occasion of the General Assembly of the Pontifical Academy for Life. I thank Archbishop Paglia for his kind words. I am grateful too for the presence of the President of the European Parliament, the FAO Director-General and the other authorities and leaders in field of information technology. I also greet those who join us from the Conciliazione Auditorium. And I am heartened by the numerous presence of young people: I see this as a sign of hope.

The issues you have addressed in these days concern one of the most important changes affecting today's world. Indeed, we could say that the digital galaxy, and specifically artificial intelligence, is at the very heart of the epochal change we are experiencing. Digital innovation touches every aspect of our lives, both personal and social. It affects our way of understanding the world and ourselves. It is increasingly present in human activity and even in human decisions, and is thus altering the way we think and act. Decisions, even the most important decisions, as for example in the medical, economic or social fields, are now the result of human will and a series of algorithmic inputs. A personal act is now the point of convergence between an input that is truly human and an automatic calculus, with the result that it becomes increasingly complicated to understand its object, foresee its effects and define the contribution of each factor.

To be sure, humanity has already experienced profound upheavals in its history: for example, the introduction of the steam engine, or electricity, or the invention of printing which revolutionized the way we store and transmit information. At present, the convergence between different scientific and technological fields of knowledge is expanding and allows for interventions on phenomena of infinitesimal magnitude and planetary scope, to the point of blurring boundaries that hitherto were considered clearly distinguishable: for example, between inorganic and organic matter, between the real and the virtual, between stable identities and events in constant interconnection.

On the personal level, the digital age is changing our perception of space, of time and of the body. It is instilling

a sense of unlimited possibilities, even as standardization is becoming more and more the main criterion of aggregation. It has become increasingly difficult to recognize and appreciate differences. On the socio-economic level, users are often reduced to “consumers”, prey to private interests concentrated in the hands of a few. From digital traces scattered on the internet, algorithms now extract data that enable mental and relational habits to be controlled, for commercial or political ends, frequently without our knowledge. This asymmetry, by which a select few know everything about us while we know nothing about them, dulls critical thought and the conscious exercise of freedom. Inequalities expand enormously; knowledge and wealth accumulate in a few hands with grave risks for democratic societies. Yet these dangers must not detract from the immense potential that new technologies offer. We find ourselves before a gift from God, a resource that can bear good fruits.

The issues with which your Academy has been concerned since its inception present themselves today in a new way. The biological sciences are increasingly employing devices provided by artificial intelligence. This development has led to profound changes in our way of understanding and managing living beings and the distinctive features of human life, which we are committed to safeguarding and promoting, not only in its constitutive biological dimension, but also in its irreducible biographical aspect. The correlation and integration between life that is “lived” and life that is “experienced” cannot be dismissed in favour of a simple ideological calculation of functional performance and sustainable costs. The ethical problems that emerge from the ways that these new devices can regulate the birth and destiny of individuals call for a renewed commitment to preserve the human quality of our shared history.

For this reason, I am grateful to the Pontifical Academy for Life for its efforts to develop a serious reflection that has fostered dialogue between the different scientific disciplines indispensable for addressing these complex phenomena.

I am pleased that this year’s meeting includes individuals with various important roles of responsibility internationally in the areas of science, industry and political life. I am gratified by this and I thank you. As believers, we have no ready-made ideas about how to respond to the unforeseen questions that history sets before us today. Our task is rather one of walking alongside others, listening attentively and seeking to link experience and reflection. As believers, we ought to allow ourselves to be challenged, so that the word of God and our faith tradition can help us interpret the phenomena of our world and identify paths of humanization, and thus of loving evangelization, that we can travel together. In this way we will be able to dialogue fruitfully with all those committed to human development, while keeping at the centre of knowledge and social praxis the human person in all his or her dimensions, including the spiritual. We are faced with a task involving the human family as a whole.

In light of this, mere training in the correct use of new technologies will not prove sufficient. As instruments or tools, these are not “neutral”, for, as we have seen, they shape the world and engage consciences on the level of values. We need a broader educational effort. Solid reasons need to be developed to promote perseverance in the pursuit of the common good, even when no immediate advantage is apparent. There is a political dimension to the production and use of artificial intelligence, which has to do with more than the expanding of its individual and purely functional benefits. In other words, it is not enough simply to trust in the moral sense of researchers and developers of devices and algorithms. There is a need to create intermediate social bodies that can incorporate and express the ethical sensibilities of users and educators.

There are many disciplines involved in the process of developing technological equipment (one thinks of research, planning, production, distribution, individual and collective use...), and each entails a specific area of responsibility. We are beginning to glimpse a new discipline that we might call “the ethical development of algorithms” or more simply “algor-ethics” (cf. [Address to Participants in the Congress on Child Dignity in the](#)

Digital World, 14 November 2019). This would have as its aim ensuring a competent and shared review of the processes by which we integrate relationships between human beings and today's technology. In our common pursuit of these goals, a critical contribution can be made by the principles of the Church's social teaching: the dignity of the person, justice, subsidiarity and solidarity. These are expressions of our commitment to be at the service of every individual in his or her integrity and of all people, without discrimination or exclusion. The complexity of the technological world demands of us an increasingly clear ethical framework, so as to make this commitment truly effective.

The ethical development of algorithms – algor-ethics – can be a bridge enabling those principles to enter concretely into digital technologies through an effective cross-disciplinary dialogue. Moreover, in the encounter between different visions of the world, human rights represent an important point of convergence in the search for common ground. At present, there would seem to be a need for renewed reflection on rights and duties in this area. The scope and acceleration of the transformations of the digital era have in fact raised unforeseen problems and situations that challenge our individual and collective ethos. To be sure, the Call that you have signed today is an important step in this direction, with its three fundamental coordinates along which to journey: ethics, education and law.

Dear friends, I express my support for the generosity and energy with which you have committed yourselves to launching this courageous and challenging process of reassessment. I invite you to continue with boldness and discernment, as you seek ways to increase the involvement of all those who have the good of the human family at heart. Upon all of you, I invoke God's blessings, so that your journey can continue with serenity and peace, in a spirit of cooperation. May the Blessed Virgin assist you. I accompany you with my blessing. And I ask you please to remember me in your prayers. Thank you.

Komt allen tot Mij die uitgeput zijt en onder lasten gebukt, en Ik zal u rust en verlichting schenken.

Message of His Holiness Pope Francis for the XXVIII World Day of the Sick 2020 - 11 February 2020

"Come to me, all you who labour and are burdened, and I will give you rest" (Mt 11:28)

Dear brothers and sisters,

1. Jesus' words, "Come to me, all you who labour and are burdened, and I will give you rest" (Mt 11:28) point to the mysterious path of grace that is revealed to the simple and gives new strength to those who are weary and tired. These words of Christ express the solidarity of the Son of Man with all those who are hurt and afflicted. How many people suffer in both body and soul! Jesus urges everyone to draw near to him – "Come to me!" – and he promises them comfort and repose. "When Jesus says this, he has before him the people he meets every day on the streets of Galilee: very many simple people, the poor, the sick, sinners, those who are marginalized by the burden of the law and the oppressive social system... These people always followed him to hear his word, a word that gave hope! Jesus' words always give hope!" (Angelus, 6 July 2014).

On this XXVIII World Day of the Sick, Jesus repeats these words to the sick, the oppressed, and the poor. For they realize that they depend entirely on God and, beneath the burden of their trials, stand in need of his

healing. Jesus does not make demands of those who endure situations of frailty, suffering and weakness, but offers his mercy and his comforting presence. He looks upon a wounded humanity with eyes that gaze into the heart of each person. That gaze is not one of indifference; rather, it embraces people in their entirety, each person in his or her health condition, discarding no one, but rather inviting everyone to share in his life and to experience his tender love.

2. Why does Jesus have these feelings? Because he himself became frail, endured human suffering and received comfort from his Father. Indeed, only those who personally experience suffering are then able to comfort others. There are so many kinds of grave suffering: incurable and chronic diseases, psychological diseases, situations calling for rehabilitation or palliative care, numerous forms of disability, children's or geriatric diseases... At times human warmth is lacking in our approach to these. What is needed is a personalized approach to the sick, not just of curing but also of caring, in view of an integral human healing. In experiencing illness, individuals not only feel threatened in their physical integrity, but also in the relational, intellectual, affective and spiritual dimensions of their lives. For this reason, in addition to therapy and support, they expect care and attention. In a word, love. At the side of every sick person, there is also a family, which itself suffers and is in need of support and comfort.

3. Dear brothers and sisters who are ill, your sickness makes you in a particular way one of those "who labour and are burdened", and thus attract the eyes and heart of Jesus. In him, you will find light to brighten your darkest moments and hope to soothe your distress. He urges you: "Come to me". In him, you will find strength to face all the worries and questions that assail you during this "dark night" of body and soul. Christ did not give us prescriptions, but through his passion, death and resurrection he frees us from the grip of evil.

In your experience of illness, you certainly need a place to find rest. The Church desires to become more and more the "inn" of the Good Samaritan who is Christ (cf. Lk 10:34), that is, a home where you can encounter his grace, which finds expression in closeness, acceptance and relief. In this home, you can meet people who, healed in their frailty by God's mercy, will help you bear your cross and enable your suffering to give you a new perspective. You will be able to look beyond your illness to a greater horizon of new light and fresh strength for your lives.

A key role in this effort to offer rest and renewal to our sick brothers and sisters is played by healthcare workers: physicians, nurses, medical and administrative professionals, assistants and volunteers. Thanks to their expertise, they can make patients feel the presence of Christ who consoles and cares for the sick, and heals every hurt. Yet they too are men and women with their own frailties and even illnesses. They show how true it is that "once Christ's comfort and rest is received, we are called in turn to become rest and comfort for our brothers and sisters, with a docile and humble attitude in imitation of the Teacher" (Angelus, 6 July 2014).

4. Dear healthcare professionals, let us always remember that diagnostic, preventive and therapeutic treatments, research, care and rehabilitation are always in the service of the sick person; indeed the noun "person" takes priority over the adjective "sick". In your work, may you always strive to promote the dignity and life of each person, and reject any compromise in the direction of euthanasia, assisted suicide or suppression of life, even in the case of terminal illness.

When confronted with the limitations and even failures of medical science before increasingly problematic clinical cases and bleak diagnoses, you are called to be open to the transcendent dimension of your profession that reveals its ultimate meaning. Let us remember that life is sacred and belongs to God; hence it is inviolable and no one can claim the right to dispose of it freely (cf. *Donum Vitae*, 5; *Evangelium Vitae*, 29-53). Life must be welcomed, protected, respected and served from its beginning to its end: both human reason and faith in God, the author of life, require this. In some cases, conscientious objection becomes a necessary decision if you are

to be consistent with your “yes” to life and to the human person. Your professionalism, sustained by Christian charity, will be the best service you can offer for the safeguarding of the truest human right, the right to life. When you can no longer provide a cure, you will still be able to provide care and healing, through gestures and procedures that give comfort and relief to the sick.

Tragically, in some contexts of war and violent conflict, healthcare professionals and the facilities that receive and assist the sick are attacked. In some areas, too, political authorities attempt to manipulate medical care for their own advantage, thus restricting the medical profession’s legitimate autonomy. Yet attacking those who devote themselves to the service of the suffering members of society does not serve the interests of anyone.

5. On this XXVIII World Day of the Sick, I think of our many brothers and sisters throughout the world who have no access to medical care because they live in poverty. For this reason, I urge healthcare institutions and government leaders throughout the world not to neglect social justice out of a preoccupation for financial concerns. It is my hope that, by joining the principles of solidarity and subsidiarity, efforts will be made to cooperate in ensuring that everyone has access to suitable treatments for preserving and restoring their health. I offer heartfelt thanks to all those volunteers who serve the sick, often compensating for structural shortcomings, while reflecting the image of Christ, the Good Samaritan, by their acts of tender love and closeness.

To the Blessed Virgin Mary, Health of the Sick, I entrust all those who bear the burden of illness, along with their families and all healthcare workers. With the assurance of a remembrance in my prayers, I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing.

From the Vatican, 3 January 2020

Memorial of the Most Holy Name of Jesus

Francis

Maak de wereld meer human door de waardigheid van gehandicapten te garanderen

Message for International Day of Persons with Disabilities

Pope Francis

3 december 2019

On the occasion of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, we renew our gaze of faith, which sees in each brother and sister the presence of Christ Himself, Who considers every gesture of love towards one of His least brothers to have been made to Himself (cf. Gospel of Matthew 25: 40). On this occasion, I would like to recall how today the promotion of the right to participation plays a central role in combating discrimination and promoting the culture of encounter and quality of life.

Great progress has been made towards people with disabilities in the medical and welfare fields, but still today we see the presence of the throwaway culture, and many of them feel that they exist without belonging and without participating. All this calls not only for the rights of people with disabilities and their families to be protected, but it also exhorts us to make the world more human by removing everything that prevents them

from having full citizenship, the obstacles of prejudice, and by promoting the accessibility of places and quality of life, taking into account of all the dimensions of the human being.

It is necessary to care for and accompany persons with disabilities in every condition of life, also making use of current technologies but without regarding them as absolute; with strength and tenderness, to take on board situations of marginalization; and to make way alongside them and to “anoint” them with dignity for an active participation in the civil and ecclesial community. It is a demanding, even tiring journey, which will increasingly contribute to forming consciences capable of recognizing that each one of us is a unique and unrepeatable person.

And let us not forget the many “hidden exiles”, who live within our homes, our families, our societies (cf. Angelus, 29 December 2013; Address to the Diplomatic Corps, 12 January 2015). I think of people of every age, especially the elderly who, also due to disabilities, are at times considered a burden, a “cumbersome presence”, and risk being discarded, of being denied concrete job prospects for the construction of their future.

We are called to recognize in every person with disabilities, even with complex and grave disabilities, a unique contribution to the common good through his or her own original life story. To acknowledge the dignity of each person, well aware that this does not depend on the functionality of the five senses (cf. Discussion with the participants in the Convention of the CEI on disability, 11 June 2016). This conversion is taught by the Gospel. It is necessary to develop antibodies against a culture that considers some lives to be “League A” and others “League B”: this is a social sin! To have the courage to give a voice to those who are discriminated against for their condition of disability, since unfortunately in some countries, still today, they are not recognized as persons of equal dignity, as brothers and sisters in humanity.

Indeed, making good laws and breaking down physical barriers is important, but it is not enough, if the mentality does not change, if we do not overcome a widespread culture that continues to produce inequalities, preventing people with disabilities from actively participating in ordinary life.

In recent years inclusive processes have been put in place and implemented, but this is still not enough, as prejudices generate, in addition to physical barriers, also limits to access to education for all, to employment and to participation. A person with disabilities, in order to build himself up, needs not only to exist but also to belong to a community.

I encourage all those who work with people with disabilities to continue with this important service and commitment, which determines the degree of civilization of a nation. And I pray that each person may feel the paternal gaze of God, who affirms his full dignity and the unconditional value of his life.

Tot ziekenhuispersoneel: ‘Jullie laten het moederlijke gezicht van God zien’

Meeting with the medical staff of St. Louis Hospital

Pope Francis
Bangkok, 21 November 2019

Dear Friends,

I am happy to have this opportunity to meet you, the medical, nursing and support staff of St. Louis Hospital and other Catholic hospitals and charitable agencies. I thank the Director for his kind words of introduction. It is a blessing for me to witness at first hand this valuable service that the Church offers to the Thai people, especially to those most in need. With affection, I greet the Sisters of Saint Paul of Chartres and all the other women religious present today, and I thank them for their quiet and joyful dedication to this apostolate over these many years. You enable us to contemplate the maternal face of God who bends down to anoint and raise up his children: thank you.

I was pleased to hear the Director speak of the principle by which this Hospital operates: *Ubi caritas, Deus ibi est* – where love is, there God is. It is precisely in the exercise of charity that we Christians are called not only to demonstrate that we are missionary disciples, but also to take stock of our own fidelity, and that of our institutions, to the demands of that discipleship. “Truly, I say to you”, says the Lord, “all that you have done to one of these my little brothers, you did it to me” (Mt 25:40). You are missionary disciples in the field of health care, for you open your hearts to “a mystical fraternity, a contemplative fraternity, capable of seeing the sacred grandeur of our neighbour, of finding God in every human being, of tolerating the nuisances of life in common by clinging to the love of God, of opening the heart to divine love and seeking the happiness of others, just as their heavenly Father does”(Evangeli Gaudium, 92).

Seen in this way, you carry out one of the greatest works of mercy, for your commitment to health care goes far beyond the simple and praiseworthy practice of medicine. This is not only a matter of procedures and programs; rather, it has to do with our readiness to embrace whatever each new day sets before us. It is about welcoming and embracing human life as it arrives at the Hospital’s emergency room, needing to be treated with the merciful care born of love and respect for the dignity of each human person. The healing process should rightly be seen as a powerful anointing capable of restoring human dignity in every situation, a gaze that grants dignity and provides support.

All of you, as members of this hospital community, are missionary disciples whenever you look at your patients and you learn to call them by name. I know that at times your service can prove burdensome and tiring; you work under extreme circumstances, and for this reason you need to be accompanied and supported in your work. This speaks to us of the need for a health care ministry in which not only patients but every member of this community can feel cared for and supported in his or her mission. Please know that your efforts and the work of the many institutions that you represent are a living testimony of the care and concern that all of us are called to show to everyone, especially the elderly, the young and those most vulnerable.

This year St. Louis Hospital celebrates the 120th anniversary of its foundation. How many people have received relief from their pain, comfort in their sorrow and companionship in their loneliness! As I give thanks to God for the gift of your presence over these years, I ask you to ensure that this and similar apostolates may increasingly become a sign and emblem of a Church on the move, which, in carrying out her mission, finds the courage to bring Christ’s healing love to all those who suffer.

At the end of this meeting, I will be visiting the sick and the disabled, as a way of accompanying them, however briefly, in their pain.

Each of us knows how illness brings with it questions that dig deep. Our first reaction may be to rebel and even experience moments of bewilderment and desolation. We cry out in pain, and rightly so: Jesus himself shared in that suffering and made it his own. With prayer, we too want to join in his own cry of pain.

By uniting ourselves to Jesus in his passion, we discover the power of his closeness to our frailty and our wounds. We are invited to cling to him and to his sacrifice. If at times we feel deeply “the bread of adversity and

the water of affliction”, let us also pray that we can find, in an outstretched hand, the help needed to discover the comfort that comes from “the Lord who does not hide himself” (cf. Is 30:20), but remains ever close to us and accompanies us at every moment.

Let us place this meeting and our lives under the protective mantle of Mary. May she turn her eyes of mercy toward you, especially at times of pain, illness and vulnerability. May she obtain for you the grace of encountering her Son in the wounded flesh of all those whom you serve.

I bless all of you and your families. And I ask you, please, not to forget to pray for me.

Thank you!

Geneeskunde is een dienst aan de mens, euthanasie niet

Toespraak van Paus Franciscus tot de Nationale Federatie van de Ordes van chirurgen en kaakchirurgen

Paus Franciscus
20 september 2019

Dierbare broeders en zusters,

Het is mijn vreugde u te ontvangen, u allen die tot de Nationale Orde van Geneesheren behoort van chirurgen en tandartsen, en ik dank u vicevoorzitter voor zijn vriendelijke woorden.

Ik weet dat u de drie laatste jaren gewijd heeft aan “de algemene toestand” van het medisch beroep, dat u zich namelijk gebogen heeft over de manier om uw activiteit op zijn best uit te oefenen in een veranderde sociale context, teneinde veranderingen die nodig zijn beter te onderscheiden om de behoeften van de mensen te verstaan en hun, naast professionele competentie, een goede menselijke band te bieden.

Geneeskunde is per definitie, een dienst aan het menselijk leven en als zodanig houdt zij een essentiële en onmisbare referentie in naar de persoon in zijn spirituele en materiële integriteit, in zijn individuele en sociale dimensie: geneeskunde staat ten dienste van de mens, van heel de mens en van alle mensen. En u, geneesheren, u bent zich van deze waarheid bewust in het spoor van een zeer lange traditie die zelfs teruggaat tot de intuïtie van Hippocrates: en het is precies omwille van deze overtuiging dat u terecht bezorgd bent voor de valstrikken die de huidige geneeskunde bedreigen.

Men dient zich altijd te herinneren dat de ziekte, die het voorwerp is van uw zorgen, meer is dan een klinisch feit dat medisch kan omschreven worden; zij is altijd de conditie van een persoon, de zieke, en het is vanuit deze integraal humane kijk dat geneesheren geroepen zijn om in relatie te treden met hun patiënt: dus door oog te hebben voor zijn eigenheid als een persoon met een ziekte, en niet alleen voor de ziekte van deze patiënt. Het gaat er voor geneesheren om, met de vereiste technische en professionele competentie, een code aan waarden en zingeving te bezitten om zin te geven aan de ziekte en hun eigen werk en van ieder klinisch geval een menselijke ontmoeting te maken.

Bijgevolg, is het binnen iedere verandering die u in de geneeskunde en de samenleving vaststelt, belangrijk dat de geneeskunde de eigenheid van iedere zieke, met zijn waardigheid en kwetsbaarheid, niet uit het oog

verliest. Een man of vrouw om gewetensvol, met begrip en met een hart te begeleiden, vooral in de meest ernstige situaties. Met deze houding kan en moet men de verleiding – eveneens ten gevolge van veranderingen in de wetgeving – afwijzen, de geneeskunde te gebruiken om een zieke bij te staan die zou willen sterven door hem bij zelfmoord te assisteren of door zijn dood rechtstreeks door euthanasie te veroorzaken.

In tegenstelling tot wat het lijkt, zijn deze keuzes niet de uitdrukking van de vrijheid van een persoon en het is voortvarend het elimineren van een zieke als een mogelijkheid te aanzien, terwijl het een verkeerd medelijden is om toe te geven aan iemands vraag zijn levenseinde te bespoedigen. Zoals het Nieuwe Charta voor mensen in de gezondheidszorg zegt: “Er bestaat geen recht om willekeurig over zijn eigen leven te beschikken, daarom mag geen enkele arts zich opstellen als de uitvoerende voogd van een recht dat niet bestaat” (nr. 169).

De heilige Johannes Paulus II doet opmerken dat de verantwoordelijkheid van beroepsmensen in de gezondheidszorg “vandaag aanzienlijk gegroeid (is); zij wordt ten diepste gedragen en krachtig gesteund juist vanuit de ethische dimensie van de beroepen van de gezondheidszorg: een intrinsieke dimensie ervan, die niet verwaarloosd mag worden. Dit erkent de oude, maar nog steeds actuele eed van Hippocrates, die van iedere geneesheer vraagt ermee in te stemmen het menselijk leven en de heiligheid ervan absoluut te eerbiedigen” (Enc. *Evangelium vitae*, 89).

Dierbare vrienden, ik roep over uw engagement Gods zegen af en vertrouw u toe aan de voorspraak van de Heilige Maagd Maria Salus Infirmorum. En vergeet alstublieft niet voor mij te bidden.

Vert. Maranatha-gemeenschap

Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to the National Federation of the Orders of doctors and dental surgeons

Pope Francis
20 September 2019

Dear brothers and sisters,

It is with pleasure that I welcome you all, members of the National Federation of the Orders of Doctors and Dental Surgeons, and I thank your vice president for his kind words. I know you have devoted the last three years to the “general states” of the medical profession, or rather, to the exchange on how best to exercise your activity in a changed social context, to identify better the changes useful to interpret people’s needs and to offer them, along with professional competences, also a good human relationship.

Medicine is by definition service to human life, and as such in involves an essential and indispensable reference to the person in his spiritual and material integrity, in his individual and social dimension: medicine is service to man, to the whole man, every man. And you doctors are convinced of this truth on the basis of a very long tradition, which dates back to the Hippocratic intuitions; and it is precisely from this conviction that there arise your just concerns for the pitfalls to which today’s medicine is exposed.

We must always remember that illness, the object of your concerns, is more than a clinical fact, medically circumscribable; it is always the condition of a person, the sick person, and it is with this entirely human vision that doctors are called to relate to the patient: considering therefore his singularity as a person who has an illness, and not only a case of whatever illness that patient has. For doctors it is a matter of possessing, together with the due technical-professional competence, a code of values and meanings with which to give meaning to

the disease and to their work, and to make each individual clinical case a human encounter.

Faced, therefore, with any change in medicine and in the society you have identified, it is important that the doctor does not lose sight of the uniqueness of each patient, with his dignity and his fragility. A man or a woman to be accompanied with conscience, intelligence and heart, especially in the most serious situations. With this attitude we can and must reject the temptation – also induced by legislative changes – to use medicine to support a possible willingness to die of the patient, providing assistance to suicide or directly causing death by euthanasia.

These are hasty ways of dealing with choices that are not, as they might seem, an expression of the person's freedom, when they include the discarding of the patient discard as a possibility, or false compassion in the face of the request to be helped to anticipate death. As the New Charter for Health Care Workers states: "There is no right to dispose arbitrarily of one's life, so no doctor can become an executive guardian of a non-existent right" (169).

Saint John Paul II observes that the responsibility of health care workers "today is greatly increased. Its deepest inspiration and strongest support lie in the intrinsic and undeniable ethical dimension of the health-care profession, something already recognized by the ancient and still relevant Hippocratic Oath, which requires every doctor to commit himself to absolute respect for human life and its sacredness" (Evangelium vitae, 89).

Dear friends, I invoke God's blessing on your commitment and I entrust you to the intercession of the Virgin Mary Salus infirmorum. Please do not forget to pray for me.

Persoonlijke zorg en aandacht voor het individu dat lijdt

Paus Franciscus
2 september 2019

Dierbare broeders en zusters, goeie dag!

Mijn hartelijke groeten aan u allen: aan de Voorzitster die ik dank voor haar woorden, aan de artsen en patiënten hier op deze bijeenkomst aanwezig, en aan alle leden.

Sinds 1973, fungeert de Italiaanse Vereniging voor medische Oncologie op het vlak van de gezondheid, op een waardevolle manier door onderzoek en preventie te stimuleren en zich toe te leggen op het verbeteren van diagnostiek en verzorging, en door talrijke initiatieven uit te werken voor bijscholing en opleiding van artsen en anderen die in de sector van oncologie beroepshalve werkzaam zijn. Uw Statuten illustreren de doeleinden van de vereniging die zich, zonder winstgevend doel, voor ogen stelt "de vooruitgang op klinisch en experimenteel vlak te promoten evenals op het vlak van de sociale hulpverlening" (art. 2), door actieve samenwerking tussen artsen van verschillende specialisaties, organismen en instituten. U engageert zich "om relaties in de hand te werken" en "wetenschappelijke banden en samenwerkingsverbanden te leggen" (ibid.) in de wetenschappelijke wereld en die van het gezondheidswezen, waarbij gestreefd wordt naar het delen van de bereikte doelen en naar samenwerking tussen verschillende disciplines, wat dikwijls belemmerd wordt door het jaloers achterhouden van kennis.

In een wereld als de onze, dikwijls gedreven door tegenstellingen op alle domeinen van het menselijk

samenleven, is de inspanning om relaties aan te knopen en in de hand te werken, essentieel voor de opbouw van het algemeen welzijn. De bewuste en dikwijls veeleisende keuze van een stijl die eerder verenigt dan verdeelt, is in het leven van de Vereniging aanwezig door aandacht voor de relatie met de zieke en zij komt vandaag juist tot uiting door de aanwezigheid van enkele patiënten onder u. De keuze om samen aan deze bijeenkomst deel te nemen en naast elkaar te zitten, is een sterk beeld en welsprekend teken, niet alleen voor de wereld van het gezondheidswezen, maar voor heel de samenleving, die geroepen is om zich te vernieuwen in een solidaire en broederlijke stijl.

Het nationaal Congres dat binnen enkele weken zal plaatshebben, zal juist gewijd zijn aan de biologische en klinische eigenheid van eenieder. Zo wordt de oncologie van de precisie die u promoveert, ook een oncologie van de barmhartigheid, omdat door de verzorging te individualiseren men niet alleen blijf geeft van aandacht voor de ziekte, maar voor de zieke en wat hem eigen is, voor de manier waarop hij op geneesmiddelen, pijnlijke informatie en lijden reageert.

Technologie dient de mens niet wanneer zij hem herleidt tot een object, wanneer zij een onderscheid maakt tussen degene die nog verzorging verdient en die het niet verdient, omdat hij te dikwijls beschouwd wordt als een last of zelfs als afval. De praktijk van euthanasie, die in meerdere landen reeds wettelijk is, wil de indruk wekken – doch dit is slechts schijn – de persoonlijke vrijheid te bevorderen; in werkelijkheid baseert zij zich op een utilitaristische kijk op de persoon, die nutteloos of als een financiële last beschouwd wordt, indien er vanuit medisch standpunt geen hoop op verbetering is en pijn niet kan vermeden worden.

In tegendeel, het engagement om de zieke en zijn naaste omgeving in alle fases van de ziekte te begeleiden, waarbij geprobeerd wordt het lijden door palliatieve zorgen te verlichten, of door in rusthuizen – die steeds talrijker worden – een familiale omgeving te creëren, draagt bij tot een cultuur en praktijk die meer aandacht hebben voor de waarde van elke persoon. Raak nooit ontmoedigd ten overstaan van het onbegrip dat u kan tegenkomen of de aanhoudende voorstellen van meer radicale en voortvarende wegen. Als men voor de dood kiest, zijn de problemen in zekere zin opgelost; maar hoeveel verbittering schuilt achter deze redenering, en hoezeer wordt de hoop vernietigd door de keuze om alles af te wijzen en alle banden te breken! Soms bevinden wij ons in een soort doos van Pandora: men weet alles, men verklaart alles, men lost alles op maar één ding blijft verborgen: de hoop. En wij moeten haar gaan zoeken. Hoe de hoop vertalen, of eerder, hoe in de meest extreme gevallen hoop geven.

Zo wordt uw dienst ook een werk van sensibilisering ten opzichte van een samenleving die weinig gewetensvol en soms verstrooid is. U herinnert haar op vele manieren aan het belang van preventie, door vroegtijdig een diagnose op te maken, zodat het gevaarlijk karakter van oncologische ziekten gevoelig kan beperkt worden, hetzij door respect voor het eigen lichaam en de eisen die het stelt. De beste en meest waarachtige preventie is namelijk die van een gezond milieu en een levensstijl die respect heeft voor het menselijk lichaam en zijn wetten. Zoals wij weten, hangt dat niet alleen af van individuele keuzes, maar ook van de plaats waar men woont, vooral in de grote centra, die het lichaam voortdurend aan stress onderwerpen omwille van het levensritme en de blootstelling aan vervuiling. Dat brengt onze aandacht naar de zorg voor het natuurlijk milieu, ons gemeenschappelijk huis, waarvoor wij respect moeten opbrengen, opdat het ons op zijn beurt zou respecteren. De bescherming van het milieu en de strijd tegen tumoren worden dan twee kanten van eenzelfde probleem, twee complementaire aspecten van eenzelfde strijd om beschaving en menselijkheid.

In uw engagement ten voordele van de zieken, het gezondheidssysteem en heel de samenleving, nodig ik u uit altijd het voorbeeld van Jezus voor de geest te houden, de grootste Meester in menselijkheid, om u aan Hem te inspireren in wat u doet en Hem tot uw reisgezel te maken. Moge Zijn gelaat, waarvan de contemplatie nooit uitgeput geraakt – zo groot is het licht dat er van uitgaat – inspireert de zieken en helpt hen de kracht vinden



om de banden van de liefde niet te breken, om hun lijden op te dragen voor hun broeders en hun vriendschap met God levendig te bewaren. Moge Zijn gelaat artsen inspireren – Hij die in zekere zin uw collega is, als geneesheer door de Vader gezonden om de mensheid te genezen – opdat zij altijd het welzijn van de anderen voor ogen hebben, edelmoedig zichzelf geven en strijden voor een meer solidaire wereld. Moge Hij iedereen inspireren om degene die lijden, nabij te zijn. Nabijheid, de houding die zo belangrijk en noodzakelijk is. Nabijheid, de Heer zelf heeft ze in ons midden beoefend. Moge Hij ieder inspireren om degenen die lijden nabij te zijn, vooral de kleinen, en om de zwakken de eerste plaats te geven, voor een meer menselijke samenleving en relaties die eerder doordrongen zijn van belangloosheid dan van opportunisme.

Ik smeed Gods zegen af over al uw activiteiten en vertrouw u toe aan de Heilige Maagd Maria, opdat Zij met moederlijke genegenheid over u zou waken, over de artsen en alle zieken. Ik verzeker u van mijn gebed en vraag u ook voor mij te bidden. Dank u!

Vertaling: Maranatha-gemeenschap

Toewijding artsen aan het H. Hart van Jezus: Jezus, arts en broeder

Toespraak tot de leden van de Internationale Federatie van Verenigingen van Katholieke Geneesheren (FIAMC)

Paus Franciscus

22 juni 2019

Mijnheer de Kardinaal, mijnheer de voorzitter, dierbare broeders en zusters,

Ik heet u welkom en dank kardinaal Turkson voor zijn vriendelijke woorden. Ik waardeer dat u tijdens uw bijeenkomst, een bijzondere toewijding heeft willen doen aan het Heilig Hart van Jezus en ik verzeker u van mijn gebed opdat zij voor ieder van u vruchtbaar mag zijn. Ik zou enkele eenvoudige gedachten met u willen delen.

De eerste christengemeenschappen hebben de Heer Jezus dikwijls voorgesteld als “geneesheer”, en benadrukten zo de constante aandacht, vol medelijden, die Hij toedroeg aan wie onder allerlei ziekten leden. Zijn zending bestond er vooreerst in, zieken of gehandicapten nabij te zijn, vooral degenen die geminacht en gemarginaliseerd werden. Zo doorbreekt Jezus het oordeel, dat een zieke dikwijls als zondaar beschouwde; met deze medelijdende nabijheid toont Hij de oneindige liefde van God de Vader voor Zijn meest noodlijdende kinderen.

De zorg voor de zieken lijkt dus één van de opbouwende dimensies van de zending van Christus; en om die reden is het in de zending van de Kerk zo gebeven. In de Evangelies is de nauwe band dus evident tussen de verkondiging van Christus en de genezingen die Hij verricht voor degenen die “er slecht aan toe waren, die door velerlei ziekten en pijnen gekweld werden, bezetenen, lijdens aan vallende ziekte en lammen” (Mat. 4, 24).

Ook de manier waarop Jezus zorg draagt voor zieken en mensen die lijden, is belangrijk. Hij raakt deze mensen dikwijls aan en laat zich aanraken, zelfs in de gevallen waarin dat verboden was. Hij doet het bijvoorbeeld met de vrouw die jarenlang aan bloedvloeiingen leed. Hij voelt dat Hij aangeraakt wordt, Hij voelt de genezende kracht die van Hem uitgaat en wanneer deze persoon Hem op de knieën belijdt wat zij gedaan heeft, zegt Hij haar: “Dochter, uw geloof heeft u genezen; ga in vrede” (Luc. 8, 48).

Voor Jezus betekent genezen, de persoon nabij zijn, ook al zouden sommigen dat willen verhinderen, zoals in het geval van de blinde Bartimeüs, in Jericho. Jezus laat hem roepen en vraagt hem: "Wat wilt ge dat Ik voor u doe?" (Marc. 10, 51). Het kan verrassend lijken dat de "geneesheer" aan degene die lijdt, vraagt wat deze van Hem verwacht. Maar dat onderlijnt de waarde van het woord en van het gesprek in de zorgrelatie. Voor Jezus betekent genezen, in gesprek gaan om het verlangen van de mens naar boven te laten komen en de zachte macht van Gods liefde, die werkzaam is in Zijn Zoon.

Want genezen betekent, een weg inslaan: een weg van verlichting, vertroosting, verzoening en genezing. Wanneer een bepaalde behandeling met oprechte liefde voor de ander gedaan wordt, dan verruimt de horizon van de verzorgde persoon, want de mens is één: hij is een eenheid van geest, ziel en lichaam. En dat is duidelijk zichtbaar in de werkzaamheid van Jezus: Hij geneest nooit een deel, maar heel de mens, integraal. Soms begint Hij bij het lichaam, soms bij het hart – dat wil zeggen door de zonden te vergeven – maar altijd om het geheel te genezen.

Tenslotte valt de zorg van Jezus samen met het oprichten van de persoon en na hem nabij te komen en genezen, te zenden. Er zijn veel zieken die na hun genezing door Jezus, Zijn leerling worden en Hem volgen.

Bijgevolg, Jezus komt nader, draagt zorg, geneest, verzoent, roept en zendt. Zoals men ziet, Zijn relatie met mensen die verdrukt worden door ziekte en gebreken, is voor Hem een persoonlijke, rijke relatie, en niet mechanisch of afstandelijk.

In die school van Jezus, de geneesheer en broeder van lijdende mensen, bent u geroepen, u, geneesheren die in Hem gelooft, die lid bent van Zijn Kerk, om mensen nabij te zijn die lijden onder de beproeving van ziekten.

U bent geroepen om te verzorgen met fijngevoeligheid, met respect voor de waardigheid, de lichamelijke en psychische integriteit van de mens.

U bent geroepen om aandachtig te luisteren, het gepaste antwoord te geven dat de verzorging begeleidt, menselijker maakt en dus ook doeltreffender.

U bent geroepen om aan te moedigen, te troosten, op te richten, hoop te geven. Men kan niet genezen en genezen worden zonder hoop; daarin zijn wij allemaal behoeftig en God dankbaar, die ons hoop geeft. Maar ook dankbaar aan degenen die werkzaam zijn in het medisch onderzoek.

In de loop van de laatste eeuw, was er zeer veel vooruitgang. Nieuwe therapieën en vele behandelingen werden beproefd. Al die zorgen waren voor de voorbije generaties ondenkbaar. Wij kunnen en moeten het lijden verlichten en iedereen opvoeden om verantwoordelijker om te gaan met zijn gezondheid en die van de naaste en familie. Wij mogen ook niet vergeten dat verzorgen betekent, de gave van het leven respecteren van het begin tot het einde. Wij zijn er geen eigenaar van: het leven wordt ons toevertrouwd en de geneesheren zijn de dienaren ervan.

Uw zending is tegelijk een getuigenis van menselijkheid, een bevoorrechte manier om ons te laten zien en voelen dat God, onze Vader, zorg draagt voor elke mens, zonder onderscheid. Daarom verlangt Hij tevens gebruik te maken van onze kennis, onze handen en ons hart om elke mens te verzorgen en te genezen, want Hij verlangt aan iedereen leven en liefde te geven.

Dat vraagt van u bekwaamheid, geduld, geesteskracht en broederlijke solidariteit. De stijl van een katholieke geneesheer verbindt professionalisme, bekwaamheid tot samenwerking en ethische striktheid. En dat alles komt ten goede aan de zieken en het milieu waarin u werkzaam bent. Het is geweten, dat de kwaliteit van een dienst dikwijls niet alleen afhangt van het hoog gehalte aan instrumenten waarover men beschikt, maar van het niveau aan professionalisme en menselijkheid van het diensthoofd en het artsenteam. We zien het alle dagen,

vele eenvoudige mensen die naar de kliniek gaan: ik zou die dokter willen – waarom? – omdat zij hun nabijheid voelen, hun toewijding.

Door u voortdurend te vernieuwen, door naar de bronnen van het woord Gods en de sacramenten te gaan, zult u uw zending goed kunnen vervullen en zal de Geest u de gave van onderscheiding geven om aan delicate en ingewikkelde situaties het hoofd te bieden, om het juiste woord op de juiste manier te zeggen en door de juiste stilte op de juiste manier.

Dierbare broeders en zusters, ik weet dat u dat reeds doet, maar ik roep u op te bidden voor degenen die u verzorgt en voor de collega's die met u samenwerken. En vergeet alstublieft ook niet voor mij te bidden. Dank u!

Pope Francis

Saturday, 22 June 2019

Your Eminence, dear President, dear brothers and sisters,

I offer you a cordial welcome and I thank Cardinal Turkson for his kind words. I am impressed that at this meeting you wanted to make a special act of consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Please know of my prayers that this will prove spiritually fruitful for each of you. I would now like to share with you a few simple thoughts.

The earliest Christian communities often spoke of the Lord Jesus as a “physician”, highlighting in this way his constant, compassionate concern for those suffering from every kind of illness. His mission consisted above all in *drawing near* to the sick and the disabled, especially to those who for that reason were looked down upon and marginalized. Jesus thus overturned the sentence of condemnation that so often labelled the sick person as a sinner. By his compassionate closeness, Jesus showed the infinite love of God our Father for his children most in need.

Care for the sick emerges, then, as an *essential* aspect of Christ's mission and, consequently, of the Church's mission as well. The Gospels show a clear link between Jesus' preaching and the acts of healing that he performed for all those who were, in Matthew's words, “afflicted with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics and paralytics” (4:24).

Important too is the way that Jesus cared for the sick and suffering. He often touched those persons and let them touch him, even in cases where it was forbidden. This was the case, for example, with the woman who had suffered for years from haemorrhages. Jesus sensed that he had been touched and that healing power had gone forth from him, and when the woman fell to her knees and confessed what she had done, he said to her: “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace” (Lk 8:48).

For Jesus, then, healing involves *drawing near to the person*, even if at times there were some who would prevent him from doing so, as in the case of the blind Bartimaeus in Jericho. Jesus had the man brought before him and asked: “What do you want me to do for you?” (Mk 10:51). It might surprise us that the “physician” should ask the patient what he expects from him! Yet this highlights the importance of words and dialogue in a relationship of care. For Jesus, care entails entering into dialogue, in order to bring out the individual's own desire and the soothing power of God's love working through his Son. Caregiving means starting a process: a process of relief, consolation, reconciliation and healing. When care is given with genuine love for the other, it expands the horizons of the recipient, for human beings are a unity: a unity of spirit, soul and body. We can see

this clearly in the ministry of Jesus. He never heals just one part, but rather the *whole* person, integrally. At times, he starts with the body, at other times with the heart – by forgiving sins (cf. *Mt 2:5*), but always for the sake of restoring the whole.

Finally, Jesus' care involves *raising up* and then *sending forth* those whom he has drawn near to and healed. Many of the sick who were cured by Christ then became his disciples and followers.

In a word, Jesus draws near, shows concern, heals, reconciles, calls and sends forth. It is obvious that, for him, a relationship with persons afflicted by illness and infirmity is one both personal and profound. Not a mechanical relationship, not a distant one.

It is to this school of Jesus, physician and brother to the suffering, that *you*, as physicians, believers and members of the Church, *have been called*. You are called to draw near to those experiencing the suffering brought on by illness.

You are called to provide care with sensitivity and with respect for the dignity and for the physical and psychological integrity of each person.

You are called to listen attentively and to respond appropriately, in addition to the physical care you provide. This will make the latter all the more humane and, consequently, all the more effective.

You are called to offer encouragement and comfort, to raise up and to give hope. Care cannot really be given or received in the absence of hope. In this sense, all of us need hope. We are grateful to God who grants us that hope. But also grateful to all those who are engaged in medical research.

The last hundred years have seen immense progress in this area. New therapies and numerous experimental treatments have developed, forms of care that would have been unimaginable in earlier generations. We can and should alleviate suffering, while at the same time teaching people to become more responsible for their own health and the health of their relatives and friends. And we must remember too, that the work of caring for others also entails respect for the gift of life from beginning to end. For we are not the masters of life; it is given to us in trust, and physicians stand at its service.

Your mission is a witness of humanity, a privileged means of helping others to see and feel that God our Father cares for every individual, without distinction. To do this, he wishes to employ our knowledge, our hands and our hearts, in order to care for and bring healing to every human being. To each of us he wants to grant life and love.

All this requires of you competence, patience, spiritual strength and fraternal solidarity. The way you fulfil your mission as Catholic physicians should unite professionalism with the capacity for teamwork and ethical integrity. This will benefit both the patient and the environment in which you carry out your work. Very often – as we know – the quality of a hospital ward depends not merely on the sophistication of its technology, but on the level of professionalism and humanity shown by the head physician and the medical team. We see this every day, many ordinary people who go to hospital: “I want to see this doctor, or that one” – why? Because they sense their closeness, their dedication.

By constant spiritual renewal and by drawing from the wellspring of God's word and the sacraments, you will accomplish your mission well. The Holy Spirit will grant you the gift of discernment needed to confront sensitive and complex situations, and to say the right things in the right way, and with the right silence, at the right time.

Dear brothers and sisters, I know that you are already doing it, but I urge you also to pray for your patients and for all your colleagues and assistants. And please, do not forget to pray for me. Thank you!

Over het ongeboren leven: geen mens is ongeschikt voor het leven

Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to participants in the conference “Yes to Life! - taking care of the precious gift of life in its frailty” organized by the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life

Pope Francis
25 May 2019

Your Eminences, Dear Brother Bishops and Priests, Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Good morning and welcome. I greet Cardinal Farrell and I thank him for his words of introduction. My greeting also goes to all taking part in this international Conference, “Yes to Life! Taking Care of the Precious Gift of Life in its Frailty”, organized by the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life, and by the Foundation Il Cuore in una Goccia, one of the groups that work daily in our world to welcome children born in conditions of extreme frailty. These are children that the throw-away culture sometimes describes as being “unfit for life”, and thus condemned to death.

No human being can ever be unfit for life, whether due to age, state of health or quality of existence. Every child who appears in a woman’s womb is a gift that changes a family’s history, the life of fathers and mothers, grandparents and of brothers and sisters. That child needs to be welcomed, loved and nurtured. Always! Even when they are crying, like that baby over there... (applause). Some people might think: “But, the baby is crying... they should leave”. No, this is music that all of us need to hear. (I think the baby heard that applause and thought it was for him!) We need to hear the sound always, even when the baby is a little annoying: Also in church: let children cry in church! They are praising God. Never, never chase a child out because he or she is crying. Thank you for your witness.

When a woman discovers that she is expecting a child, she immediately feels within her a deep sense of mystery. A woman who becomes a mother knows this. She is aware of a presence growing within her, one that pervades her whole being. Now she is not only a woman but also a mother. From the very beginning, an intense, interactive dialogue takes place between her and the child. Scientists call this “cross-talk”. It is a real and intense relationship between two human beings communicating with one another from the very first moments of conception, and it leads to a mutual adjustment as the child grows and develops. This ability to communicate is not only on the part of the woman; even more, the child, as an individual, finds ways to communicate his or her presence and needs to the mother. Thus, this new human being immediately becomes a son or daughter, and this moves the woman to connect with her child with all her being.

Nowadays, from the very first weeks, modern prenatal diagnosis techniques can detect the presence of malformations and illness that may at times seriously endanger the life of the child and the mother’s peace of mind. Even the suspicion of an illness, and especially the certainty of a disease, changes the experience of pregnancy and causes deep distress to women and couples. A sense of isolation, helplessness and concern about the eventual suffering of the child and the whole family, all this is like a silent cry, a call for help in the darkness, when faced with an illness whose outcome cannot be foreseen with certainty. Every illness takes its own course, nor can physicians can always know how it will affect each individual.

Yet, there is one thing that medicine knows well, and that is that unborn children with pathological conditions are little patients who can often be treated with sophisticated pharmacological, surgical and support interventions. It is now possible to reduce the frightening gap between diagnoses and therapeutic options. For years, that has been one of the reasons for elective abortion and abandonment of care at the birth of many children with serious medical conditions. Foetal therapies on the one hand, and perinatal hospices on the other, achieve surprising results in terms of clinical care, and they provide essential support to families who embrace the birth of a sick child.

These possibilities and information need to be made available to all, in order to expand a scientific and pastoral approach of competent care. For this reason, it is essential that doctors have a clear understanding not only of the aim of healing, but also of the sacredness of human life, the protection of which remains the ultimate goal of medical practice. The medical profession is a mission, a vocation to life, and it is important that doctors be aware that they themselves are a gift to the families entrusted to them. We need doctors who can establish a rapport with others, assume responsibility for other people's lives, be proactive in dealing with pain, capable of providing reassurance, and always committed to finding solutions respectful of the dignity of each human life.

In this sense, perinatal comfort care is an approach to care that humanizes medicine, for it entails a responsible relationship to the sick child, who is accompanied by the staff and his or her family in an integrated care process. The child is never abandoned, but is surrounded by human warmth and love.

This is particularly necessary in the case of those children who, in our current state of scientific knowledge, are destined to die immediately after birth or shortly afterwards. In these cases, treatment may seem an unnecessary use of resources and a source of further suffering for the parents. However, if we look at the situation more closely, we can perceive the real meaning behind this effort, which seeks to bring the love of a family to fulfilment. Indeed, caring for these children helps parents to process their mourning and to understand it not only as loss, but also as a stage in a journey travelled together. They will have had the opportunity to love their child, and that child will remain in their memory forever. Many times, those few hours in which a mother can cradle her child in her arms leave an unforgettable trace in her heart. And she feels, if I may use the word, realized. She feels herself a mother.

Unfortunately, the dominant culture today does not promote this approach. On a social level, fear and hostility towards disability often lead to the choice of abortion, presenting it as a form of "prevention". However, the Church's teaching on this point is clear: human life is sacred and inviolable, and the use of prenatal diagnosis for selective purposes must be strongly discouraged. It is an expression of an inhumane eugenic mentality that deprives families of the chance to accept, embrace and love the weakest of their children.

Sometimes we hear people say, "You Catholics do not accept abortion; it's a problem with your faith". No, the problem is pre-religious. Faith has nothing to do with it. It comes afterwards, but it has nothing to do with it. The problem is a human problem. It is pre-religious. Let's not blame faith for something that from the beginning has nothing to do with it. The problem is a human problem. Just two questions will help us understand this clearly. Two questions. First: is it licit to eliminate a human life to solve a problem? Second: is it licit to hire a killer to resolve a problem? I leave the answer to you. This is the point. Don't blame religion for a human issue. It is not licit. Never, never eliminate a human life or hire a killer to solve a problem.

Abortion is never the answer that women and families are looking for. Rather, it is fear of illness and isolation that makes parents waver. The practical, human and spiritual difficulties are undeniable, but it is precisely for this reason that a more incisive pastoral action is urgently needed to support those families who accept sick children. There is a need to create spaces, places and "networks of love" to which couples can turn, and to spend time assisting these families.

I think of a story that I heard of in my other Diocese. A fifteen-year-old girl with Down syndrome became pregnant and her parents went to the judge to get authorization for an abortion. The judge, a very upright man, studied the case and said "I would like to question the girl". [The parents answered:] "But she has Down syndrome she doesn't understand". [The judge replied:] "No, have her come". The young girl sat down and began to speak with the judge. He said to her: "Do you know what happened to you". [She replied:] "Yes, I'm sick". [The judge then asked:] "And what is your sickness?" [She answered:] "They told me that I have an animal inside me that is eating my stomach, and that is why I have to have an operation". [The judge told her:] "No, you don't have a worm that's eating your stomach. You know what you have? It's a baby". The young girl with Down syndrome said: "Oh, how beautiful!" That's what happened. So the judge did not authorize the abortion. The mother wanted it. The years passed; the baby was born, she went to school, she grew up and she became a lawyer. From the time that she knew her story, because they told it to her, every day on her birthday she called the judge to thank him for the gift of being born. The things that happen in life... The judge is now dead and she has become a public prosecutor. See what a beautiful thing happened! Abortion is never the response that women and families are looking for.

Thank you, then, to you who are working for all this. Thank you, in particular, families, mothers and fathers, who have welcomed life that is frail – and I emphasize that word "frail" – for mothers, and women, are specialists in situations of frailty: welcoming frail life. And now, all of you are supporting and helping other families. Your witness of love is a gift to the world. I bless you and keep you in my prayer. And I ask you, please, to pray for me.

Orgaandonatie moet een vrijwillige en onbetaalde daad zijn

Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to the Italian Association for The Donation of Organs, Tissues and Cells (AIDO)

Pope Francis
13 april 2019

I am pleased to welcome you all, volunteers of the Italian Association for Organ, Tissue and Cell Donation, gathered here to represent the thousands of people who have chosen to bear witness to and disseminate the values of sharing and donation, without asking for anything in return. I greet you all cordially and thank your president, Dr. Flavia Petrin, for the words with which she introduced this meeting.

The developments in transplant medicine have made it possible to donate organs after death, and in certain cases in life (as, for example, in the case of the kidney), so as to save other human lives; to conserve, recover and improve the state of health of many sick people who have no other alternative. Organ donation responds to a social need because, despite the development of many medical cures, its usefulness is never exhausted, since these are profoundly human experiences filled with love and altruism. Donation means looking to and going beyond oneself, beyond individual needs, and opening up with generosity towards a broader good. From this perspective, organ donation is not only an act of social responsibility, but also an expression of the universal fraternity that links all men and women to each other.

In this regard, the Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that "Organ donation after death is a noble and

meritorious act and is to be encouraged as a expression of generous solidarity” (2296). By virtue of the intrinsic relational dimension of the human being, each one of us realizes himself also through participation in the realization of the good of others. Every subject represents a good not only for himself, but for society as a whole; from this there derives the meaning of commitment for the achievement of the good of our neighbour.

In the Encyclical Letter *Evangelium vitae*, Saint John Paul II reminded us that, among the gestures that contribute to nurturing an authentic culture of life, “A particularly praiseworthy example ... is the donation of organs, performed in an ethically acceptable manner, with a view to offering a chance of health and even of life itself to the sick who sometimes have no other hope” (86). Therefore it is important to maintain organ donation as a freely and unpaid act. Indeed, any form of commodification of the body or any part of it is contrary to human dignity. In donating blood or an organ of the body, it is necessary to respect the ethical and religious perspective.

As for those who do not have religious faith, the gesture towards brothers in need demands to be performed on the basis of an ideal of selfless human solidarity. Believers are called to live it as an offering to the Lord, Who identified with those who suffer as a result of disease, road accidents or accidents at work. It is good, for Jesus’ disciples, to offer one’s own organs, according to the terms consented by law and morality, as it is a gift made to the suffering Lord, Who said that whatever we do to a brother in need, we do also to Him (cf. Mt 25: 40).

It is therefore important to promote a culture of donation that, through information, awareness-raising and your constant and appreciated effort, promotes this offering of a part of one’s own body, without risk or disproportionate consequences, in donation by the living, and of all organs after death. From our own death and from our gift, there may spring life and health for others, the sick and suffering, contributing to strengthening a culture of help, of giving, of hope and of life. Faced with threats against life, which we unfortunately witness almost daily, as in the case of abortion and euthanasia, society needs these concrete gestures of solidarity and generous love.

I encourage you to continue in your efforts to defend and promote life, through the wonderful methods of organ donation. I like to recall Jesus’ words: “Give, and it will be given to you: A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap” (Lk 6: 38). We shall receive our recompense from God according to the sincere and concrete love we have shown towards our neighbour.

May the Lord support your good works. For my part, I accompany you with my blessing.