

God deed aan mij zijn wonderwerken

Verrukking voor al wat God doet: “die machtig is, deed aan mij zijn wonderwerken”. (Vgl. Lc. 1,49) - 25e Wereldgebedsdag voor de zieken (2017)



8 december 2016, Feest van de Onbevleete Ontvangenis
Paus Franciscus

Dierbare broeders en zusters,

Op 11 februari aanstaande zal in heel de Kerk en bijzonder in Lourdes, de 25e Weredziekendag gevierd worden rond het thema: Verrukking voor al wat God doet: “Die machtig is, deed aan mij zijn wonderwerken” (Lc. 1, 49). In 1992 ingesteld door mijn voorganger, de heilige Johannes Paulus II en voor het eerst gevierd precies in Lourdes op 11 februari 1993, is deze dag een gelegenheid om bijzonder aandacht te schenken aan de situatie van de zieken en meer in het algemeen voor de lijdende mens; hij is tegelijk een uitnodiging aan wie zich voor hen inzetten, vooreerst hun naastbestaanden, maar ook het verzorgingspersoneel en de vrijwilligers, om de Heer te danken voor de roeping die zij van Hem ontvingen om hun zieke broeders te begeleiden. Bovendien vernieuwt deze gelegenheid de geesteskracht van de Kerk om dit fundamenteel aspect van haar zending steeds beter te ontplooiën ten dienste van de zieken, de lijdende of uitgesloten mens en de marginalen. (1) De gebedsmomenten, Eucharistievieringen en Ziekenzalving, de uitwisseling met de zieken en de bio-ethische en theologisch-pastorale verdieping die deze dagen in Lourdes zullen plaatshebben, zijn beslist een nieuwe en belangrijke bijdrage aan deze dienstverlening.

In de geest ben ik nu reeds in de grot van Massabielle, bij het beeld van de Onbevleete Maagd Maria, aan wie de Almachtige grote dingen gedaan heeft voor de verlossing van de mensheid, en u allen, broeders en zusters die lijden en uw familie, wil ik laten weten dat ik u nabij ben en iedereen waardeer die zich in zijn eigen rol en in alle sanitaire structuren over heel de wereld, met competentie, verantwoordelijkheid en toewijding inzet voor uw verlichting, behandeling en dagelijks welzijn. Ik wil u allen aanmoedigen, de zieken, de mensen die lijden, de artsen, het verpleegkundig personeel, de naastbestaanden, de vrijwilligers, om naar Maria te kijken, Heil van de zieken, waarborg van Gods tederheid voor iedere mens, en voorbeeld van overgave aan Zijn wil; moge u in het geloof, gevoed door het Woord en de Sacramenten, de kracht vinden om God en de broeders te beminnen, ook bij ziekte.

Zoals de heilige Bernadette, staan ook wij onder de blik van Maria. Het nederige jonge meisje van Lourdes vertelt dat de Maagd, die zij “de Mooie Dame” noemt, haar aankeek zoals men een persoon aankijkt. Deze eenvoudige woorden beschrijven de volheid van een relatie. Bernadette, arm, ongeletterd en ziek, voelt zich door Maria aangekeken als een persoon. De Mooie Dame spreekt met veel eerbied tot haar, niet hooghartig. Dat herinnert ons eraan dat elke zieke een mens is en dat altijd blijft, en als zodanig moet bejegend worden. Zieken en – soms zwaar – gehandicapten, hebben hun onvervreembare waardigheid en zending in het leven en worden nooit zomaar een object, ook al lijken zij soms louter passief, doch in werkelijkheid is dat nooit zo.

Nadat zij naar de grot gegaan is, heeft Bernadette dankzij het gebed, haar kwetsbaarheid omgezet in steun voor anderen; dank zij de liefde kon zij haar naaste verrijken, vooral door haar leven te offeren voor het heil van de mensheid. Het feit dat de Mooie Dame haar vraagt voor de zondaars te bidden, herinnert ons eraan dat zieken,

mensen die lijden, in zich niet alleen het verlangen dragen om te genezen maar ook om hun leven christelijk te leiden, en het tenslotte als authentieke missionaire volgelingen van Christus te geven. Maria geeft aan Bernadette de roeping om dienstbaar te zijn aan de zieken en roept haar om een zuster van naastenliefde te zijn, een zending die zij in zo hoge mate tot uiting brengt, dat zij een voorbeeld wordt waaraan iedereen die in de gezondheidszorg werkt, zich kan spiegelen. Vragen wij dus aan de Onbevleete Ontvangenis de genade om zo met zieken te kunnen omgaan, zeker als met iemand die hulp nodig heeft, soms ook voor de meest elementaire zaken, maar ook als met iemand die een persoonlijke gave in zich draagt om met anderen te delen.

De blik van Maria, Troosteres van de bedroefden, verlicht het gelaat van de Kerk in haar dagelijkse inzet voor behoeftige mensen en mensen die lijden. De kostbare vrucht van deze toewijding van de Kerk voor de wereld van lijden en ziekte, is een reden tot dankbaarheid aan de Heer Jezus, die zich solidair gemaakt heeft met ons, gehoorzaam aan de wil van de Vader tot in de dood op het kruis, om de mensheid vrij te kopen. Solidariteit met Christus, Gods Zoon, uit Maria geboren, brengt Gods barmhartige almacht tot uiting die zich in ons leven manifesteert - vooral wanneer het kwetsbaar is, gewond, vernederd, gemarginaliseerd, lijdend - zij blaast ons de kracht van de hoop in die ons weer doet opstaan en ondersteunt.

Zoveel rijkdom aan menselijkheid en geloof mag niet verloren gaan, maar moet ons eerder helpen ons te confronteren met onze menselijke zwakheid en de uitdagingen van de hedendaagse gezondheidszorg en technologie. De Wereldziekendag kan ons een nieuw elan geven om bij te dragen tot de verspreiding van een cultuur die het leven, de gezondheid en het milieu respecteren; evenals een nieuwe impuls om de mens als geheel en in zijn waardigheid te respecteren; en een juiste benadering van bio-ethische kwesties, de bescherming van de zwakste mens en van het milieu.

Ter gelegenheid van de 25e Wereldziekendag, verzeker ik opnieuw in gebed en aanmoediging nabij te zijn aan artsen, verpleegkundig personeel, vrijwilligers en Godgewijden die ten dienste staan van zieke en noodlijdende mensen; aan de Kerkelijke en burgerlijke instellingen die zich op dat vlak inzetten; aan de families die met liefde zorg dragen voor hun zieke naastbestaanden. Het is mijn wens dat iedereen steeds een vreugdevol teken zou zijn van Gods aanwezigheid en liefde, door het lichtend getuigenis na te volgen van zo veel Godsvrienden onder wie de heilige Johannes de Deo en de heilige Camillus de Lellis, patronen van klinieken en gezondheidspersoneel, en de heilige Moeder Theresa van Calcutta, missionaris van Gods tederheid.

Broeders en zusters, laat iedereen, zieken, gezondheidspersoneel en vrijwilligers, zich samen in gebed tot Maria verheffen, opdat Haar moederlijke voorspraak ons geloof ondersteunt en begeleidt en dat Zij voor ons van Haar Zoon moge verkrijgen dat wij hoopvol de weg gaan van genezing en gezondheid, van broederlijkheid en verantwoordelijkheidszin, van inzet voor de integrale ontwikkeling van de mens en van dankbaarheid die vreugde geeft, telkens wanneer de hoop ons verwondert over Zijn trouw en barmhartigheid.

*O Maria, onze Moeder,
die ieder van ons in Christus opneemt als een kind,
ondersteun de vertrouwvolle verwachting van ons hart,
kom ons te hulp in onze ziekte en ons lijden,
leidt ons naar Christus Uw Zoon en onze Broeder,
en help ons ons toe te vertrouwen aan de Vader die grote dingen doet.*

Ik verzeker u allen in gebed te blijven gedenken en geef u van harte de apostolische Zegen.

Noten

1. Vgl. H. Paus Johannes Paulus II, Motu Proprio, Oprichting van de Pauselijke Raad voor de Pastorale in de Gezondheidszorg, Dolentium Hominum (11 feb 1985), 1

Tot cardiologen

Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to participants in the World Congress of Cardiology “Esc Congress 2016”



31 August 2016, Nuova Fiera di Roma
Pope Francis

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning! I was pleased to accept the invitation of the Executive Committee of the European Society of Cardiology to meet with you on the occasion of this World Congress which brings together cardiologists from various countries. I am particularly grateful to Professor Fausto Pinto for his kind words and, through him, I thank each of you for the scientific work in these days of study and relating to one another – relating to others is so important – but above all for your dedication to so many who are sick. Relating well to those who are sick is a challenge.

You look after the heart. And how much symbolism is enshrined in this word! How many hopes are contained in this human organ! In your hands you hold the beating core of the human body, and as such your responsibility is very great! I am sure that as you find yourselves before this book of life with its many pages yet to be discovered, you are filled with trepidation and awe.

The Magisterium of the Church has always affirmed the importance of scientific research for human life and health. The Church not only accompanies you along this demanding path, but also promotes your cause and wishes to support you. The Church understands that efforts directed to the authentic good of the person are actions always inspired by God. Nature, in all its complexity, and the human mind, are created by God; their richness must be studied by skilled men and women, in the knowledge that the advancement of the philosophical and empirical sciences, as well as professional care in favour of the weakest and most infirm, is a service that is part of God’s plan. Openness to the grace of God, an openness which comes through faith, does not weaken human reason, but rather leads it to move forwards, to knowledge of a truth which is wider and of greater benefit to humanity.

At the same time, we know that the scientist, in his or her research, is never neutral, in as much as each one has their own history, their way of being and of thinking. Every scientist requires, in a sense, a purification; through this process, the toxins which poison the mind’s pursuit of truth and certainty are removed, and this enables a more incisive understanding of the meaning of things. We cannot deny that our knowledge, even our most precise and scientific knowledge, needs to progress by asking questions and finding answers concerning the origin, meaning and finality of reality; and this includes man. The sciences alone, however, whether natural or physical, are not sufficient to understand the mystery contained within each person. When man is viewed in his totality – allow me to emphasize this point – we are able to have a profound understanding of the poorest, those most in need, and the marginalized. In this way, they will benefit from your care and the support and assistance offered by the public and private health sectors. We must make great efforts to ensure that they are not “discarded” by a culture which promotes a “throwaway” mentality.

By means of your invaluable work, you contribute to the healing of physical illness and are able to perceive that there are laws engraved within human nature that no one can tamper with, but rather must be “discovered, respected and cooperated with” so that life may correspond ever more to the designs of the Creator (cf. Gaudium et Spes, 36). For this reason, it is important that men and women of science, as they examine themselves in the light of that great mystery of human existence, do not give in to the temptation to suppress the truth (cf. Rom 1:18).

With these sentiments, I renew my appreciation for your work – I too have been in some of your hands – and I ask the Lord to bless your research and medical care, so that everyone may receive relief from their suffering, a greater quality of life and an increasing sense of hope. And I ask him to bless your daily efforts so that no one will be “discarded” from society and from the fullness of human life.

Gender: ideologische kolonisatie

Apostolic journey of his Holiness Pope Francis to Poland on the occasion of the XXXI World Youth Day (27-31 July 2016): meeting with the Polish bishops



Address of his Holiness Pope Francis

Cathedral of Kraków
Wednesday, 27 July 2016

Pope Francis:

Before beginning our dialogue, with the questions that you prepared, I would like to perform a work of mercy with all of you and to suggest another. I know that these days, with World Youth Day, many of you have been busy and so you couldn't go to the funeral of Archbishop Zimowski. It is a work of charity to bury the dead, so I would like us all together to say a prayer for Archbishop Zygmunt Zimowski as a genuine sign of fraternal charity, that of burying a dead brother. Our Father... Hail Mary... Glory be... Requiem aeternam...

Then, the other work of mercy I would suggest. I know that you are concerned about this: our dear Cardinal Macharski is very sick. At least stop by, because I think that you cannot see him, since he is unconscious. But at least stop by the hospital and touch the walls, as if to say: “Brother, I am close to you”. Visiting the sick is another work of mercy. I myself plan to go. Thank you.

Now, someone has prepared the questions or at least sent them to me. I am ready.

Archbishop Marek Jędraszewski (Łódź)

Holy Father, it seems that the faithful of the Catholic Church, and more generally all Christians in Western Europe, increasingly find themselves a minority in the midst of a modern, godless, liberal culture. In Poland, we are witnessing a profound clash, an enormous struggle, between faith in God on the one hand, and on the other a way of thinking and acting as if God did not exist. According to you, Holy Father, what kind of pastoral activity should the Catholic Church in our country undertake, so that the Polish people can remain faithful to its more than 1000-year-old Christian tradition? Thank you.

Pope Francis:

You are the Bishop of...?

Archbishop Jędraszewski:

Łódź, where Saint Faustina began her journey, because there she heard Christ telling her to go to Warsaw to become a nun. The story of her life began in my city.

Pope Francis:

You are very privileged!

True, the dechristianization, the secularization of the modern world is powerful, very powerful. But there are also those who say that while it is powerful, there are also clear indications of religiosity, of a reawakening of the religious sense. This too can be dangerous. I believe that in this highly secularized world we have also the other danger, that of a gnostic spiritualization. Secularization makes it possible for us to indulge in a spiritual life which is a little gnostic. We remember that this was the first heresy in the Church - the apostle John went after the gnostics, relentlessly! - it consists in a subjective spirituality, without Christ. For me the bigger problem with secularization is dechristianization: removing Christ, removing the Son. I pray, I feel... and that is all.

This is gnosticism. There is another heresy fashionable nowadays, pelagianism, but let us for the moment disregard it and return to what I was saying [about dechristianization]. To find God without Christ. God but not Christ, people but not Church. Why? Because the Church is a Mother, who gives you life, and Christ is our older brother, the Son of the Father, completely oriented to the Father, who reveals the Father's name. A Church of orphans: today's gnosticism, inasmuch as it is a dechristianization, lacking Christ, leads to a Church, or better, to Christians, becoming a people of orphans. We have to make our people see this.

What would I advise? I would say - but I believe it is in the Gospel, where there is precisely the Lord's own teaching - closeness. Today we, the Lord's servants - bishops, priests, consecrated persons and committed laypeople - need to be close to God's people. Without closeness, there are only disembodied words. Let us think - I like to reflect on this - of the two pillars of the Gospel. What are the two pillars of the Gospel? The Beatitudes and Matthew 25, the "criteria" on which all of us will be judged. Concreteness, closeness, touching, the corporal and spiritual works of mercy.

"But you are saying all this because it is fashionable to speak about mercy this year!" No! This is the Gospel! The Gospel, the works of mercy. It shows us the Samaritan heretic who is moved, does what he has to do, and even risks his money! To touch. Then there is Jesus, who was always with people, with the disciples, or alone with the Father in prayer. Closeness. Touching. This is Jesus's life... And when he was moved, at the gates of the city of Nain (cf. Lk 7:11-17), he went over to touch the bier saying: "Do not weep..." Closeness. It is closeness to touch the suffering flesh of Christ. The Church, the glory of the Church, is of course the martyrs, but also all those men and women who left everything to spend their lives in hospitals and schools, with children and with the sick...

I remember in Central Africa, an elderly Sister with a little girl came to greet me. "I'm not from here, but from the other part of the river, from Congo, but once a week I come here to shop because it is easier". She told me that she was 83 or 84 years old. "I've been here for 23 years, I'm an obstetric nurse and I have delivered two or three thousand babies..." "And you come here alone?" "Yes, we take the canoe..." At 83 years of age! With the canoe, it took her about an hour to get there. This woman - and many others like her - left home (she was an Italian, from Brescia) to touch the flesh of Christ. If we go to the mission countries in the Amazon region and Latin America, in the cemeteries we see the tombs of so many men and women religious who died young because they lacked antibodies for the diseases in those countries, and died young.

The works of mercy: to touch, to teach, to console, to “waste time”. To waste time. I was very pleased once: a man who went to confession was in a situation where he couldn't receive absolution. He had gone with a certain apprehension, because he had been sent away several times before: “No, no, go away”. The priest listened to him, explained the man's situation, and told him: “But you keep praying. God loves you. I will give you my blessing. Do you promise to come back?” This priest “wasted time” in order to draw that man towards the sacraments. That is what closeness means.

Since I am talking to bishops about closeness, I think I have to talk about the most important kind of closeness: your closeness to your priests. A bishop must be available to his priests. When I was in Argentina and I would give the Exercises (I love to give the Exercises), I would say to priests: “Go talk to your bishop about this!” “But no, I called him but his secretary tells me that he is very busy right now, but he can receive you three months from now”. Priests treated like this feel orphaned, without a father, without closeness, and they begin to lose heart. When a bishop sees that a priest has called him, he should call him right back, either that evening or the next day. “Sure, I am busy, but is this important? Let's see if we can work something out”. The priest can then sense that he has a father. If we don't show our fatherhood to our priests, how can we ask them to be fathers to others? Thus the sense of God's fatherhood begins to fade. The work of the Son is to touch human weakness: spiritual and corporal. Closeness. The work of the Father: to be a father, a bishop and a father.

Then too, young people. Because we have to talk about young people during these days. The young are “a bother”! Because they always come and say the same things. “Here is what I think...” or, “the Church should do this or that...” We need to be patient with young people. I knew a few priests when I was young. Those were the days when people went to confession more frequently than now. Those priests spent hours listening to the young, or received them in the parish office to hear the same things over and over, but they did so patiently. And then, to take young people out into the country, to the mountains... Think of Saint John Paul II. What did he do with the university students? Yes, he gave them classes, but he also went with them to the mountains! Closeness. He listened to young people, he spent time with them...

There is one last thing I would emphasize, because I believe that the Lord asks it of me: grandparents, the elderly. You suffered under communism, atheism. You know that it was the elderly who preserved and passed on the faith. The elderly possess the memory of a people; they preserve the memory of the faith, the memory of the Church. Don't waste the elderly! In this throwaway culture, dechristianized as it is, we discard whatever is not useful or helpful. No! The elderly are the memory of a people; they are the memory of the faith. To connect young people with the elderly: this too is closeness. To be close and to build closeness.

That is how I would respond to the question. There are no easy answers, but we have to get our hands dirty. If we wait for the doorbell to ring, or for people to knock on the door... No, we have to go out and seek, like the shepherd who goes out to seek the lost sheep. Anyway, that's what I think...

Archbishop Sławoj Leszek Głódź (Danzig):

Dear Pope Francis, before all else we are most grateful that you have deepened the teaching of mercy inaugurated by Saint John Paul II right here in Kraków. We all know that we are living in a world dominated by injustice: the rich become richer, and the poor become poorer. There is terrorism, and godless liberal ethics and morality... My question is this: How do we apply the teaching of mercy, and above all, to whom? The Pope has been promoting a medicine called “misericordina”, which I have brought along with me: thanks for promoting this...

Pope Francis:

... now there is “misericordina plus”: even stronger!

Archbishop Głóg:

..., yes, and thank you for this “plus”. We too have a “plus” programme promoted by the Government for large families. “Plus” is fashionable. To whom, and how above all? In the first place, to whom should our teaching on mercy be addressed? Thanks.

Pope Francis:

Thank you. This idea of mercy is not something I came up with. It is a process. We can see that Blessed Paul VI had spoken about mercy. Then Saint John Paul II was the giant of mercy, with his encyclical *Dives in Misericordia*, the canonization of Saint Faustina and then the Octave of Easter: he died on the eve of that day. It is a process going on for years in the Church. It is clear that the Lord asked for a renewal in the Church of this attitude of mercy among the faithful. He is the Merciful One who forgives everything.

I have always been struck by a medieval capital in the Basilica of Saint Mary Magdalen in Vézelay, France, where the Camino of Saint James begins. On that capital, one side shows Judas hanged, his eyes open, his tongue sticking out, while the other side shows the Good Shepherd who carries him. If we look carefully at the face of the Good Shepherd, the lips on one side are sad but on the other they are smiling. Mercy is a mystery. It is a mystery. It is the mystery of God. I did an interview that later became a book called *The Name of God is Mercy*, but that is a journalistic expression. I think it can be said that God is the Father of mercy. At least Jesus, in the Gospel, makes us see him that way. God punishes in order to convert. And then there are the parables of mercy, and the way he chose to save us. In the fullness of time, he sent his Son to be born of a woman: in the flesh he saves us, in the flesh. Not on the basis of fear, but in the flesh. In this process which has taken place in the Church we receive so many graces.

You see this world reeling from injustice, lack of love, and corruption. True enough. Today, on the airplane, speaking of that priest in his 80s who was killed in France... for some time I have been saying that the world is at war, that we are in a third world war fought piecemeal. We think of Nigeria... Ideologies, yes. But what is the central ideology of today, the one that is the mother of corruption and war? It is the idolatry of money. Men and women are no longer at the apex of creation, replaced by the idol of money, and everything is bought and sold for money. Money at the centre. People exploited. And the way people are being treated today? The same as ever: with cruelty!

I was speaking about this with a government leader, and he told me: “There is always been cruelty. The problem is that today we watch it on television; it has become part of our lives”. Cruelty. Killing for money. Exploiting people, exploiting creation. A newly-elected government leader from Africa came to see me and told me: “My first official act was to re-forest the country, which had been deforested and destroyed”. We don’t care for creation! And this means more poor people, more corruption. What are we thinking, when 80% – more or less, look up statistics and if it’s not 80%, it is 82 or 75% – of the world’s wealth is in the hands of less than 20% of its people. “Please, Father, don’t talk that way, you are talking like a communist!” Far from it, these are the statistics! And who is paying for it? People are paying, the people of God: exploited girls, young people without employment. In Italy, 40% of young people under 25 are unemployed; it is 50% in Spain and in Croatia 47%... And why? Because of a liquid economy that encourages corruption. A good Catholic told me of his scandal when he went to see a business friend of his: “I’ll show you how I can earn \$20,000 without leaving home”. And with the computer, from California, he bought something or other and then sold it in China. In twenty minutes, or even less, he had earned \$20,000. Everything is liquid! Young people do not have a culture of work because they have no jobs. The earth is dying, because it has been exploited without wisdom. And so we go on. The world is warming, why? Because we have to make money. Profit. “We have succumbed to the idolatry of money”: so an ambassador told me when he came to present his credentials. It is a form of idolatry.

Divine mercy is the witness, the witness of so many people, so many men and women, lay people, young people: in Italy, for example, cooperatives. Sure, there are always a few people too clever for their own good, but so many good things get done. Then there are the institutions to care for the sick: solid organizations. That is another way to do things, to foster human dignity. But what you are saying is true. We are suffering from religious illiteracy to the point that, in some shrines around the world, things get confused: people go there to pray. There are shops that sell objects of devotion like rosaries. But there are others that sell objects of superstition because people seek salvation in superstition. Religious illiteracy and a relativism that confuses one thing with another. And that is where catechesis is needed, lifelong catechesis, a catechesis that not only imparts ideas but accompanies people on their journey. Accompaniment is one of the most important attitudes, being ready to accompany people's growth in faith.

This takes a lot of effort, but young people are looking for this! Young people are waiting... "If I start to talk, they'll be bored!" But give them some work to do. Tell them to go, during their holidays, for two weeks, to help build modest homes for the poor or to do something else. They begin to feel that they are useful. And there let God's seed fall. Slowly. With words alone, nothing happens! Today's religious illiteracy has to be countered with three languages, with three tongues: the language of the mind, the language of the heart and the language of the hands. All three together, harmoniously.

Anyway... I am talking too much! These are ideas I'm offering. You, in your good judgment, will know what to do. But we must always be a Church that goes forth. Once I dared to talk about that verse in the Book of Revelation: "I am standing at the door, knocking" (3:20). God is knocking at our door. I asked how many times the Lord knocks on our door from within, asking us to open it and let him go out with us, bringing the Gospel. Not staying inside, but going out. Going out! Thank you.

Bishop Leszek Leszkiewicz (Auxiliary of Tarnow):

Holy Father, our pastoral work is based largely on the traditional model of the parish community, centred on the sacramental life. It is model that is still effective. Nonetheless, we are aware that, in our situation too, the circumstances of daily life are changing rapidly and challenge the Church to come up with new pastoral models. Pastors and faithful are a bit like those disciples who are attentive and active, but do not always know how best to exploit the missionary dynamism, interior and exterior, of the ecclesial communities. Holy Father, in *Evangelii Gaudium* you speak of missionary disciples who enthusiastically bring the Good News to today's world. What do you suggest to us? Is there a specific way you can encourage us to build up the Church community in our world fruitfully, joyfully and with a missionary spirit?

Pope Francis:

Thank you! I would like to stress one thing: the parish remains valid! The parish must remain. It is a structure that we must not discard; it is the home of God's People. The problem is how the parish is organized! There are parishes with ungodly parish secretaries who scare people off. Parishes with closed doors. But there also parishes with open doors, parishes where when someone comes to ask a question, they are told: "Come in, make yourself at home, what can we do for you?" And someone listens to them patiently, because caring for the people of God requires patience; it takes effort! A fine university professor, a Jesuit whom I knew in Buenos Aires, asked the provincial when he retired to be assigned as a parish priest in a city neighbourhood, in order to have that experience. Once a week he would come back to the university - he was a member of that community - and one day he told me: "Tell your professor of ecclesiology that there are two things missing in his course". "What?" First, the holy people of God essentially wear you out. And second, the holy people of God naturally do whatever they think best. And this wears you out! Today being a parish priest is exhausting: managing a parish takes effort nowadays, with so many problems. The Lord has asked us to get a little tired, to work and not to rest.

A parish is exhausting if it is well organized. The renewal of the parish has to be a constant concern of bishops. How is this parish doing? What is it doing? What is its religious education programme like? How well is catechesis being presented? Is the church open? So many things... I think of one parish in Buenos Aires. Whenever an engaged couple arrived to get married, the secretary would immediately begin by saying: "Here are the prices". This is wrong, parishes like this are wrong. How do we greet people? How attentive are we to them? Is someone always in the confessional? In parishes – not those in the country but in city parishes and those on the highways – if there is a confessional with the light on, people always come. Always! A welcoming parish. These are the questions we bishops should be asking our priests. "How is your parish doing. Do you go out? Do you visit the imprisoned, the sick, the elderly? What about the children? Do you have a place for them to play? What about the oratory? The oratory is one of the great parish institutions, at least in Italy. There kids play and learn a little catechesis. They come home tired, happy, and a good seed has been sown.

So the parish is important! There are those who say that the parish is no longer relevant because this is the hour of the movements. That is not true! The movements help, but the movements must not be an alternative to the parish. They must help in the parish, contribute to the parish, like the confraternities, Catholic Action and so many other groups. To want to innovate and change the parish structure? What I am saying may seem heretical, but it is how I see things. I believe the parish structure is analogous to the episcopal structure, different but analogous. The parish cannot be touched; it has to remain as a place of creativity, a reference point, a mother, all these things. It is where that inventiveness has to find expression.

When a parish does all this, it becomes – with regard to missionary disciples – what I call a "parish that goes forth". For example, I think about one parish – a good example that was later imitated by many – in a town where children tended not to be baptized because people didn't have a lot of money. But they would prepare for the patronal feast three or four months beforehand by visiting homes and seeing how many children were unbaptized. They would then prepare the families and as part of the patronal feast they would baptize thirty or forty children who otherwise would not have been baptized.

Coming up with things of this kind... People don't get married in Church. I think of a priests meeting where someone got up and said: "Have you considered why?" And he gave all those reasons we know about: the present culture, etc. But there are lots of people who do not get married because it is expensive! It costs money. Everything costs money... the party... it is a big social event. And that priest, who was quite creative, said: "If anyone wants to get married, I will wait for you". Because in Argentina, we have two weddings: first you get married civilly and then you go to your place of worship and get married. Some – many! – do not come [to the Church] to get married because they don't have the money for a big party... But the priests who are smart say: "Don't worry, I'll wait for you!" "On the days that the civil marriage office is open – from 11 to 12 and from 1-2 – I won't take my siesta!" So after the civil marriage the couples come to the Church, get married and leave in peace.

To be creative, to try to go out and meet people, to put yourself in people's shoes. Nowadays parishes that are "offices" don't work, because people are not disciplined. Your people are disciplined, and this is a grace of God. But people in general are not disciplined – I think of my own country: if you don't go out to find them, if you don't approach them, they do not come. This is what it means to be a missionary disciple, a parish that goes forth. To go out and look for people, as God did, when he sent his Son to find us.

I don't know if this is a simplistic answer, but I don't have any other. I'm not a brilliant pastoral theologian, I just say whatever comes to mind.

Bishop Krzysztof Zadarko (Auxiliary of Koszalin-Kołobrzeg):

Holy Father, one of the most troubling problems facing Europe today is the question of refugees. How can we

help them, since they are so numerous? And what can we do to counter fears of an invasion or aggression on their part, which would paralyze society as a whole?

Pope Francis:

Thank you! The problem of refugees... It wasn't always like this. Let's speak of migrants and refugees, considering the two together. My father was a migrant. I told the President [of Poland] that in the factory where my father worked, there were many Polish immigrants, in the period after the war. I was a child and I knew many of them. My country is a country of immigrants, everybody... And there were no problems. Other times, really...

Why is there so much migration today? I am not talking about emigration from one's own country to another. This is due to lack of work; it is clear that people leave to seek employment abroad. This is a domestic problem, which you yourselves have to some extent... Here I am speaking of those who come to us, fleeing from wars, from hunger. The problem is back there. Why is the problem there? Because in those countries people are exploited, the earth is being exploited, there is exploitation for the sake of making more money. In talking with world economists who see this problem, they say: "We need to invest in these countries. Investments will lead to employment and then there will be no need to emigrate". But there is war! There is tribal warfare, ideological wars or other artificial wars created by arms traffickers who make a living from this. They give weapons to you, who are against them, and to them, who are against you. That is how they make a living!

Corruption is really at the origin of migration. What can be done? I believe that every country has to look at times and means. Not all countries are alike; not all countries have the same possibilities. But they do have the possibility of being generous! Generous as Christians. We cannot invest there, but for those who come here...

How many and how? There is no one answer that fits every case. For acceptance depends on the situation of each country and culture. But certainly many things can be done. For example, weekly prayer to the Blessed Sacrament, prayer for those who knock at Europe's door and are unable to enter. Some do, but others don't... Then one does enter and takes a path that generates fear. We have countries that for years have done a good job of integrating migrants. They have integrated them well. In others, unfortunately, certain ghettos have formed. A whole reform has to take place, on a worldwide level, with regard to this commitment and acceptance. But that is something relative: what is absolute is a welcoming heart. That is absolute! With prayer and intercession, by doing what I can. What is relative is the way I am able to do it. Not everyone can do it the same way. The problem is worldwide! The exploitation of creation, and the exploitation of persons. We are experiencing a moment of the annihilation of man as the image of God.

I would like to conclude with this aspect, since behind all this there are ideologies. In Europe, America, Latin America, Africa, and in some countries of Asia, there are genuine forms of ideological colonization taking place. And one of these - I will call it clearly by its name - is [the ideology of] "gender". Today children - children! - are taught in school that everyone can choose his or her sex. Why are they teaching this? Because the books are provided by the persons and institutions that give you money. These forms of ideological colonization are also supported by influential countries. And this terrible!

In a conversation with Pope Benedict, who is in good health and very perceptive, he said to me: "Holiness, this is the age of sin against God the Creator". He is very perceptive. God created man and woman; God created the world in a certain way... and we are doing the exact opposite. God gave us things in a "raw" state, so that we could shape a culture; and then with this culture, we are shaping things that bring us back to the "raw" state! Pope Benedict's observation should make us think. "This is the age of sin against God the Creator". That will help us.

But you will say to me: “What does this have to do with migrants?” It has to do with the overall situation, no? As for migrants, I would say: the problem is there in their native lands... But how do we welcome them? Everyone has to determine how. But all of us can have an open heart and think of spending an hour in the parishes, an hour of adoration and prayer for migrants. Prayer moves mountains!

These are the four questions. Anyway... Pardon me if I’ve talked too much, but my Italian blood betrays me...

Thank you very much for your welcome, and let us hope these days will fill us with great joy. Let us now pray to Our Lady, who is our Mother and who always takes us by the hand.

Salve Regina...

And don’t forget the elderly, who are the memory of a people.

Recht op gezondheidszorg is universeel

To the members of Doctors with Africa (Collegio Universitario Aspiranti e Medici Missionar)



7 mei 2016
Paus Franciscus

I am pleased, dear Brothers and Sisters, to welcome each one of you, “Doctors with Africa – CUAMM”, who work to safeguard the health of the African peoples; and even more pleased after hearing the words which brought me so much closer to those faraway places, the witness of these doctors has taken my heart to where you go simply to find Jesus. This has done me much good. Thank you. An expression of the missionary spirit of the Diocese of Padua, your organization over the course of the years has involved so many people who, as volunteers, have worked to accomplish long-term projects with a view to development. I thank you for what you are doing to promote the fundamental human right to health for all. Health, indeed, is not a consumer good, but a universal right which means that access to healthcare services cannot be a privilege.

Healthcare, even basic treatment, is in fact denied — denied! — in various parts of the world and in many regions of Africa. It is not regarded as a universal right, but rather still a privilege for the few, those who can afford it. Accessibility to healthcare services, to treatment and medicine is still a mirage. The poorest are unable to pay and are excluded from hospital services, even from the most essential and basic. This shows how important your generous work is in support of an extensive network of services, designed to meet the needs of the populations.

You have chosen Africa’s poorest countries, the sub-Sahara, and the most forgotten areas, “the last mile” of healthcare systems. They are the geographic peripheries to which the Lord sends you to be Good Samaritans, to go out to meet the poor Lazarus, passing through the “door” that leads from the first to the third world. This is your “holy door”! You work among the most vulnerable sections of the population: mothers, to ensure them a safe and dignified delivery, and children, newborns in particular. In Africa, too many mothers die during

childbirth and too many children do not survive the first month of life due to malnutrition and major endemic diseases. I encourage you to remain in the midst of this wounded and aching humanity: it is Jesus. Your work of mercy is caring for the sick, according to the Gospel motto "Heal the sick" (Mt 10:8). May you be the expression of the Mother Church, who bends down to the weakest and takes care of them.

To foster authentic and lasting development procedures, extended time frames are necessary, in the rationale of confidently planting seeds and patiently awaiting the fruit. All this is also shown by the history of your organization, which for over 65 years has worked beside the poorest in Uganda, Tanzania, Mozambique, Ethiopia, Angola, South Sudan, Sierra Leone. Africa needs patient and continuous, tenacious and competent support. Interventions require serious professional training, they demand research and innovation and impose the duty of transparency to donors and to public opinion.

You are doctors "with" Africa and not "for" Africa, and this is very important. You are called to involve the African people in their growth process, walking together, sharing tragedy and joy, sorrow and enthusiasm. People are the primary artisans of their own development, the first in charge! I know that you meet daily challenges frankly and selflessly, without proselytizing or occupying spaces, but rather by working with the Churches and local governments, in the logic of participation, by sharing commitments and mutual responsibilities. I exhort you to maintain your particular approach to the local settings, helping them to grow and letting them take over when they are able to continue on their own, in a prospect of development and sustainability. It is the logic of seeds, which vanish and die in order to bear lasting fruit.

In your valuable service to Africa's poor you have as models your founder, Dr Francesco Canova, and your well-known director, Fr Luigi Mazzucato. Dr Canova cultivated in the FUCI [Italian Catholic Federation of University Students] the idea to travel the world caring for the least, projecting a "college for aspiring missionary doctors" and describing the profile of the lay missionary doctor. For his part, the late Fr Mazzucato was the director of CUAMM for 53 years. He passed away last 26 November at the age of 88. He was the true inspiration behind the fundamental choices, first all poverty. Thus he wrote in his spiritual testament: "Born poor, I have always sought to live with the minimum necessary. I have nothing of my own and I have nothing to bequeath. The little clothing that I have should be given to the poor".

In the wake of these great missionary witnesses to the Gospel and their fruitful closeness, you carry on your work with courage, giving expression to a Church that is not a 'super clinic for VIPs', but rather a 'field hospital': a Church with a great heart, close to the many wounded and humiliated of history, to the poorest of the poor. I assure you of my closeness and my prayer: I bless all of you, your families, and your commitment to the present and the future of the African continent. And I ask you, please, to pray for me too, that each day the Lord may make me poorer. Thank you!

Drie aspecten bij de zorg voor mensen met een zeldzame ziekte

Address to participants of the International Conference on the Progress of Regenerative Medicine and its cultural impact



29 april 2016
Pope Francis

Dear Friends,

I am pleased to welcome all of you. I thank Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi for his words and, above all, for having organized this meeting on the challenging problem of rare diseases within today's social and cultural context. During your discussions, you have offered your professionalism and high-level expertise in the area of researching new treatments. At the same time, you have not ignored ethical, anthropological, social and cultural questions, as well as the complex problem of access to care for those afflicted by rare conditions. These patients are often not given sufficient attention, because investing in them is not expected to produce substantial economic returns. In my ministry I frequently meet people affected by so called "rare" diseases. These illnesses affect millions of people throughout the world, and cause suffering and anxiety for all those who care for them, starting with family members.

Your meeting takes on greater significance in the Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy; mercy is "the fundamental law that dwells in the heart of every person who looks sincerely into the eyes of his brothers and sisters on the path of life" (*Misericordiae Vultus*, 2). Your work is a sign of hope, as it brings together people and institutions from diverse cultures, societies and religions, all united in their deep concern for the sick.

I wish to reflect, albeit briefly, on three aspects of the commitment of the Pontifical Council for Culture and institutions working with it: the Vatican Science and Faith Foundation-STOQ, the Stem for Life Foundation, and many others who are cooperating in this cultural initiative.

The first is "increasing sensitivity". It is fundamentally important that we promote greater empathy in society, and not remain indifferent to our neighbour's cry for help, including when he or she is suffering from a rare disease. We know that we cannot always find fast cures to complex illnesses, but we can be prompt in caring for these persons, who often feel abandoned and ignored. We should be sensitive towards all, regardless of religious belief, social standing or culture.

The second aspect that guides your efforts is "research", seen in two inseparable actions: education and genuine scientific study. Today more than ever we see the urgent need for an education that not only develops students' intellectual abilities, but also ensures integral human formation and a professionalism of the highest degree. From this pedagogical perspective, it is necessary in medical and life sciences to offer interdisciplinary courses which provide ample room for a human formation supported by ethical criteria. Research, whether in academia or industry, requires unwavering attention to moral issues if it is to be an instrument which safeguards human life and the dignity of the person. Formation and research, therefore, aspire to serve higher values, such as solidarity, generosity, magnanimity, sharing of knowledge, respect for human life, and fraternal and selfless love.

The third aspect I wish to mention is "ensuring access to care". In my Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* I highlighted the value of human progress today, citing "areas such as health care, education and communications" (52). I also strongly emphasized, however, the need to oppose "an economy of exclusion and

inequality” (53) that victimizes people when the mechanism of profit prevails over the value of human life. This is why the globalization of indifference must be countered by the globalization of empathy. We are called to make known throughout the world the issue of rare diseases, to invest in appropriate education, to increase funds for research, and to promote necessary legislation as well as an economic paradigm shift. In this way, the centrality of the human person will be rediscovered. Thanks to coordinated efforts at various levels and in different sectors, it is becoming possible not only to find solutions to the sufferings which afflict our sick brothers and sisters, but also to secure access to care for them.

I encourage you to nurture these values which are already a part of your academic and cultural programme, begun some years ago. So too I urge you to continue to integrate more people and institutions throughout the world into your work. During this Jubilee Year, may you be capable and generous co-operators with the Father’s mercy. I accompany you and bless you on this journey; and I ask you, please, pray for me. Thank you.

Niet zelden worden zonden vermomd als deugd

Toespraak tot de Algemene Vergadering van de Pauselijke Academie voor het Leven



3 maart 2016
Paus Franciscus

Beste broeders en zusters,

Ik heet u allen welkom, die hier bijeen bent voor de Algemene Vergadering van de pauselijke Academie van het Leven. Het doet me bijzonder genoeg Kardinaal Sgreccio te ontmoeten, nog altijd op de been! Dank U! Deze dagen zullen gewijd zijn aan de studie van de deugden in de ethiek van het leven, een onderwerp van academisch belang dat een belangrijk boodschap afgeeft aan de hedendaagse cultuur: het goede dat de mens doet is niet het resultaat van berekeningen of strategie, ook is het niet het product van genetische ordening of maatschappelijke conditionering, maar het is de vrucht van een goed ingesteld hart, van de vrije keuze die tot het werkelijk goede neigt. Wetenschap en technologie zijn niet voldoende; om goed te doen is de wijsheid van het hart noodzakelijk.

De heilige Schrift zegt ons op verschillende manieren dat goede en kwade bedoelingen niet van buiten af in de mens komen, voortkomen uit zijn “hart”. “Van binnenuit,” zegt Jezus tot ons, “uit het hart van de mens, komen de kwade gedachten” (Mk 7, 21). In de Bijbel is het hart niet alleen het orgaan van de gevoelens, maar ook van de geestelijke vermogens, het verstand en de wil. Het is de zetel van de besluiten, van de manier van denken en handelen. Bij de keuzewijsheid, die openstaat om door de Heilige Geest bewogen te worden, is ook het hart betrokken. Daar worden goede werken geboren, maar ook verkeerde, wanneer de waarheid en de ingevingen van de Geest verworpen worden. Het hart is, alles bijeen genomen, de samenvatting van de menselijkheid, vorm gegeven door de handen van God zelf (vgl. Gen 2, 7) en door de Schepper beschouwd met een voldoening zonder weerga (vgl. Gen 1, 31). God stort Zijn eigen wijsheid in het hart van de mens.

In onze tijd herkennen sommige culturele richtingen het kenmerk van de goddelijke wijsheid in de geschapen werkelijkheid niet meer en zelfs niet in de mens. De menselijke natuur wordt dan teruggebracht tot slechts stof, om gevormd te worden naar elk gewenst ontwerp.

In plaats daarvan is de mensheid uniek en in Gods ogen zo kostbaar! Daarom is datgene in de natuur dat we allereerst moeten beschermen onze eigen menselijkheid, zodat die vrucht kan dragen. We moeten haar de zuivere lucht van de vrijheid en het leven gevende water van de waarheid geven; we moeten het beschermen tegen de vergiften van egoïsme en leugens. Dan zal er op de bodem van onze menselijkheid een grote verscheidenheid aan deugden kunnen opbloeien.

De deugd is de meest eigenlijke uitdrukking van het goede dat de mens met Gods hulp kan verwezenlijken. "Zij maakt het voor de persoon niet alleen mogelijk om goede daden te stellen, maar om het beste van zichzelf te geven" (Katechismus van de Katholieke Kerk, 1803). De deugd is niet een eenvoudige gewoonte; zij is de voortdurend vernieuwde houding om het goede te kiezen. Deugd is geen emotie, het is geen vaardigheid die wordt verworven door een opfriscursus en nog het minst van alles een biochemisch mechanisme, maar het is de meest verheven uitdrukking van de menselijke vrijheid. Deugd is het beste wat het mensenhart te bieden heeft. Als het hart zich van het goede afkeert en van de waarheid die vervat is in het Woord van God, dan loopt het zoveel gevaren, het blijft verstoken van oriëntatie en riskeert dat het goed kwaad noemt en kwaad goed. Dan gaat de deugd verloren en neemt de zonde gemakkelijker haar plaats in en daarna de ondeugd. Wie aan dit glibberige pad voedsel geeft vervalt in morele dwaling en wordt bedrukt door een groeiende existentiële angst.

De heilige Schrift toont ons de dynamiek van het verharde hart: hoe meer het hart neigt tot egoïsme en kwaad, des te moeilijker wordt het om het te veranderen. Jezus zegt ons: "Wie zonde begaat is een slaaf van de zonde" (Joh 8, 34). Als het hart bedorven is dan zijn de gevolgen voor het maatschappelijke leven ernstig en de profeet Jeremias herinnert ons daaraan. Ik citeer: "Maar gij hebt geen oog en geen hart dan voor uw voordeel alleen, voor het vergieten van onschuldig bloed, voor geweld en verkrachting" (Jer 22, 17). Deze toestand kan niet veranderen bij machte van theorieën of door maatschappelijke of politieke hervormingen. Alleen het werk van de Heilige Geest kan ons hart omvormen, als we meewerken: God zelf heeft inderdaad zijn werkzame genade verzekerd aan wie Hem zoekt en zich bekeert "uit heel zijn hart" (vgl. Gal 2, 12 ev). Er zijn tegenwoordig veel instellingen die zich wijden aan de dienst van het leven door middel van wetenschappelijk onderzoek en ondersteuning; zij bevorderen niet alleen goede daden maar ook een hartstocht voor het goede. Toch zijn er ook zoveel structuren die meer gericht zijn op economisch belang dan op het algemeen belang. Spreken over de deugd betekent bevestigen dat de keuze voor het goede de hele persoon aangaat en opeist; het is geen "cosmetische" zaak, geen uiterlijke verfraaiing, die geen vrucht zal dragen: op het terrein van de ethiek van het leven gaat het er dan ook om de onwaarachtige verlangens van het hart uit te roeien en met oprechtheid het goede te zoeken. Op het gebied van de ethiek van het leven is de noodzaak van normen die het respect voor de persoon bevestigen op zichzelf niet voldoende om het goed van de mens volledig tot stand te brengen. Het zijn de deugden van iemand die werkt aan de bevordering van het leven die de uiteindelijke garantie zijn dat het goede werkelijk in acht zal worden genomen. Vandaag mankeert het niet aan wetenschappelijke kennis en technische instrumenten waarmee het menselijk leven te ondersteunen in situaties waarin het op zijn zwakst is. Maar de menselijkheid ontbreekt daarbij zo vaak. Een goede handeling is niet de juiste toepassing van ethische wijsheid maar het veronderstelt een werkelijke interesse in de fragiele persoon. Artsen en alle werkers in de gezondheidszorg mogen nooit nalaten om wetenschap, technologie en menselijkheid te combineren.

Daarom beveel ik de universiteiten aan dit alles in aanmerking te nemen in hun opleidingsprogramma's, zodat de studenten deze instelling van hart en geest kunnen doen rijpen, die noodzakelijk is om het menselijk leven op te nemen en er zorg aan te geven in overeenstemming met de waardigheid die het onder alle omstandigheden eigen is. Ik nodig de directeuren van instellingen van gezondheidszorg en -onderzoek uit om

hun medewerkers een menselijke behandeling te laten zien als een integraal deel van de dienstverlening die hun bevoegdheid is. Mogen in alle gevallen zij die zich wijden aan de verdediging en de bevordering van het leven vóór alles in staat zijn om daarvan de schoonheid te laten zien.. Inderdaad, zoals “de Kerk niet groeit door proselitisme maar door ‘aan te trekken’ (Evangeliï Gaudium, 14) zo kan het menselijke leven ook alleen worden verdedigd en bevorderd wanneer het bekend is en zijn schoonheid wordt getoond. Door de beleving van een waarachtig medeleven en van de andere deugden zult u de bevoorrechte getuigen zijn van de barmhartigheid van de Vader van het leven.

De hedendaagse cultuur houdt nog vast aan het uitgangspunt dat stelt dat de mens, ongeacht zijn levenssituatie, een waarde is die beschermd moet worden; die waarde valt echter vaak ten offer aan morele onzekerheid, die het onmogelijk maakt het leven doeltreffend te verdedigen. Het gebeurt dan ook niet zelden dat onder de naam van deugd een “schitterende ondeugd” verborgen gaat. Daarom is het noodzakelijk dat de deugden niet alleen de wijze van denken en handelen van de mens richting geven, maar dat zij worden gecultiveerd door een voortdurend maken van onderscheid en door geworteld te zijn in God, die de bron van alle deugd is. Ik zou hier graag iets herhalen dat ik al vaak gezegd heb: We moeten alert zijn op de nieuwe ideologische kolonisatie die het menselijke denken, ook het christelijke denken, aan het overnemen is onder het mom van deugd, van moderniteit, van een nieuwe houding, maar dat is een kolonisatie, die de vrijheid wegneemt, het is een ideologie, dat wil zeggen, zij is bang voor de werkelijkheid, zoals God die geschapen heeft. Laten we vragen om de hulp van de Heilige Geest, zodat Hij ons verheft uit ons egoïsme en onze onwetendheid: als we door hem vernieuwd zijn kunnen we denken en handelen naar Gods hart en Zijn barmhartigheid tonen aan wie in lichaam en geest lijdt.

De wens die ik u wil overbrengen is dat het werk van deze dagen vruchtbaar moge zijn en u en allen die u in uw werk ontmoet moge begeleiden op een weg van groei in de deugd. Ik dank u en ik vraag u, alstublieft, niet te vergeten voor mij te bidden. Dank U.

Vertaling: dr. J.A. Raymakers

Address to participants in the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Academy for Life

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I offer my welcome to all of you, gathered for the General Assembly of the Pontifical Academy for Life. I am especially pleased to meet Cardinal Sgreccia, always on his feet, thank you! These days will be dedicated to studying the practice of virtue in the ethics of life, a theme of academic interest, which addresses an important message to contemporary culture: the good that mankind accomplishes is not the result of calculations or policies, nor is it the result of hereditary genetics or of social status. Rather, it is the fruit of a willing heart, of free choice which seeks true goodness. Science and technology are not enough: doing good requires wisdom of heart.

In various ways, Sacred Scripture tells us that good or evil intentions do not enter the person from without, but come from within one's 'heart'. "From within", Jesus said, "out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts" (Mk 7:21). In the Bible, the heart is the organ not only of feelings but of spiritual faculties, reason and will; it is the seat of decisions, and of the manner of thinking and acting. The wisdom of choice, open to the prompting of the Holy Spirit, also concerns the heart. From here are born good works but also mistakes when the truth and the prompting of the Spirit are rejected. The heart, in other words, is the synthesis of humanity formed by the very hands of God (cf. Gen 2:7) and beheld by its Creator with singular satisfaction (cf. Gen 1:31). God pours his own wisdom into the heart of man.

In our time, certain cultural orientations no longer recognize the imprint of divine wisdom in created things, not even in the person. Human nature is thus reduced to mere matter, pliable to any design. Our humanity, however, is unique and very precious in the eyes of God! For this reason, the first nature to safeguard, so that it may bear fruit, is our very humanity. We must give it the clean air of freedom and the life-giving water of truth. We must protect it from the poison of selfishness and falsehood. Then a great variety of virtues will be able to blossom in the soil of our humanity.

Virtue is the most authentic expression of good that man, with God's help, is capable of achieving. "It allows the person not only to perform good acts, but to give the best of himself" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, n. 1803). Practising virtue is not a simple habit; it is the habit that is constantly renewed to choose to do good. Virtue is not an emotion, nor is it an ability acquired in a training course, much less a biochemical mechanism. It is the highest expression of human freedom. Virtue is the best that the human heart has to offer. When the heart moves away from goodness and from the truth contained in the Word of God, it is exposed to a multitude of dangers. It is deprived of direction and risks calling good evil, and evil good; virtue is lost, more easily replaced by sin, and then vice. Those who step onto this slippery slope fall into moral error and are burdened with an increasing sense of existential anguish.

Sacred Scripture shows us the dynamic of a hardened heart: the more the heart leans toward selfishness and evil, the harder it is to change. Jesus says: "every one who commits sin is a slave to sin" (Jn 8:34). When the heart is corrupted, the consequences in social life are grave, as the Prophet Jeremiah reminds us. I quote: "you have eyes and heart only for your dishonest gain, for shedding innocent blood, and for practising oppression and violence" (22:17). This situation cannot be changed by theories or by social or political reform. Only if we cooperate can the work of the Holy Spirit reform our hearts. God himself, indeed, has assured his efficacious grace to those who seek him and to those who convert "with all their heart" (cf. Jl 2:12 ff.).

Today there are many institutions committed to the service of life, whether in research or assistance; they promote not only good actions, but also a passion for the good. But there are also many structures that are more concerned with economic interests than with the common good. To talk about virtue means to affirm that choosing the good involves and engages the whole person; it is not a question of "cosmetics", an exterior adornment, which could not bear fruit. It is the uprooting of dishonest desires and the sincere quest for the good.

Also in the sphere of the ethics of life, the necessary norms, which support respect of the person, are not enough on their own to fully ensure man's good. The virtue of one who works for the promotion of life is the ultimate guarantee that the good will really be respected. Today scientific knowledge and technical instruments are not lacking, its able to offer support to human life in weakest aspects. But humanity is so often lacking. Good actions are not the correct application of ethical wisdom, what is needed is a real interest in the frail person. The doctors and all health workers must always combine science, technology and humanity.

Therefore, I encourage universities to consider all this in their programmes of formation, so that the students can improve those dispositions of the heart and mind, which are indispensable to receive and take care of human life, according to the dignity that belongs to it in any circumstance. I also invite the directors of health structures and of research to ask their employees to consider human treatment an integral part of their qualified service. In every case, may those who dedicate themselves to the defense and promotion of life be able to show first of all its beauty. In fact, as "it is not by proselytizing that the Church grows, but 'by attraction'" (Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 15), so human life is safeguarded and promoted effectively only when it is known and its beauty is shown. By experiencing genuine compassion and practising the other virtues, you will be privileged witnesses of the mercy of the Father of life.

While contemporary culture still keeps the premises that affirm man, regardless of his condition of life, as a value to be protected, it often falls victim to moral uncertainty, which does not enable it defend life effectively. Not infrequently then, it can happen that “splendid vices” parade themselves under the guise of virtue. Hence, it is necessary not only that virtue inform man’s thought and action in a real way, but that the virtues be cultivated continuously in discernment and that they be rooted in God, the source of all virtue. I would like to repeat here something I have said many times: we must beware of the new ideological colonization that invades human and Christian thought, under the pretense of virtue, modernity and new attitudes. It is actually colonization, that is, it takes away freedom. And it is an ideology, afraid of reality as God has created it. Let us ask the Holy Spirit for help, so that he will draw us out of egoism and ignorance. Renewed by him, we can think and act according to God’s heart and show his mercy to those who suffer in body and spirit.

My wish for you is that your work in these days may bear fruit and accompany you and all those you meet in your service on a path of virtuous growth. I thank you and I ask you, please, not to forget to pray for me. Thank you.

Eerbied voor ongeboren leven

Drievoudige oproep voor de Werelddag van de Vrede: Geen oorlog, kwijtschelding van schuldenlast, eerbied voor ongeboren leven



1 januari 2016
Paus Franciscus

De andere volken niet meesleuren in conflicten, de schuld van de arme landen kwijtschelden, een politiek van respectvolle samenwerking aangaande het fundamentele en onvervreembare recht van het ongeboren kind op leven: dit is de drievoudige uitdaging van Paus Franciscus tot de landen in zijn Boodschap voor de Werelddag van de Vrede op 1 januari 2016, *“Overwin de onverschilligheid en win de vrede”*.

Nee aan besmetting door oorlog

De Paus ziet de vrede als een overwinning van vrijheid en verantwoordelijkheid en tegelijk als een “gave Gods” voor de verwezenlijking van de “broederlijkheid” in de “familie der volken”.

“Ik wens een drievoudige oproep te doen”, kondigt de Paus aan in het laatste deel van zijn boodschap. De eerste zegt nee aan oorlog: het is een oproep “om andere volken niet mee te sleuren in conflicten of oorlogen die niet alleen hun natuurlijke, culturele en sociale rijkdommen vernietigen maar ook – en dit op lange termijn – hun morele en spirituele integriteit”.

De tweede is een oproep “tot kwijtschelding van de internationale schuld van de armste landen of een draaglijk beleid ervan”: een punt dat op de agenda stond van het Grote Jubeljaar 2000, dat in de Bijbelse traditie van de jubilea staat en tegelijk zin voor de economische realiteit weerspiegelt.

Pleiten voor het leven

De derde is een oproep om het recht op leven te eerbiedigen in de internationale betrekkingen, ’t is te zeggen

een oproep “om een politiek van samenwerking te voeren die niet plooit voor de dictatuur van bepaalde ideologieën, maar eerbied betoont voor de waarden van de plaatselijke bevolking en in geen geval een aanslag pleegt op het fundamentele en onvervreembare recht op leven van het ongebooren kind”. Een oproep die zich kant tegen wat de Paus meermaals de “ideologische kolonisatie” noemt.

De Paus plaatst zijn oproepen in het perspectief van het Jubeljaar zowel op het vlak van de enkeling als van de Staten: hij roept op tot “concrete gebaren” en “moedige daden”: “In de geest van het Jubeljaar van de Barmhartigheid is iedereen geroepen te erkennen hoe onverschilligheid zich manifesteert in het persoonlijk leven, en zich concreet te engageren voor de verbetering van de realiteit waarin hij leeft, te beginnen met het eigen gezin, de buurt of het werk. Ook de Staten zijn geroepen tot concrete gebaren, moedige daden tegenover de meest zwakke personen in hun samenleving, zoals gevangenen, migranten, werklozen en zieken”.

Gevangenis en afschaffing van de doodstraf

Voor wat de gevangenen betreft, heeft de Paus reeds aan elke gevangene gevraagd om in de geest van het Jubeljaar, zijn celdeur te beschouwen als een Heilige Poort. Nu vraagt hij aan de Staten “concrete maatregelen”, met inbegrip van maatregelen voor amnestie en afschaffing van de doodstraf.

“Voor wat de gevangenen betreft, lijkt het in veel gevallen dringend nodig concrete maatregelen te treffen om hun levensvoorwaarden in de gevangenis te verbeteren, met bijzondere aandacht voor wie van zijn vrijheid beroofd is in afwachting van een vonnis; met het doel voor ogen dat strafmaatregelen hebben, namelijk de heropvoeding; en de mogelijkheid te overwegen om in nationale wetgevingen alternatieve straffen voor opsluiting in te lassen. In die context, wens ik tot de nationale autoriteiten de oproep te herhalen om de doodstraf af te schaffen waar zij nog in voege is, en de mogelijkheid van amnestie te overwegen.”

Wetgevingen voor migranten

De Paus pleit vervolgens voor de migranten en breekt een lans tegen clandestiniteit : “Wat de migranten betreft, zou ik willen vragen de migratiewetgevingen te herschrijven zodat zij bezield zijn door de wil tot opvang, wederzijds respect voor plichten en verantwoordelijkheden, en het vergemakkelijken van de integratie van migranten. In dit perspectief zou bijzondere aandacht moeten verleend worden aan de verblijfsvoorwaarden voor migranten, in het besef dat clandestiniteit het gevaar meebrengt dat migranten de weg van de criminaliteit opgaan.”

Drie basisbehoeften en de waardigheid van de werknemer

“Ik wens bovendien in dit Jubeljaar een dringende oproep te doen tot de verantwoordelijken van de landen om concrete gebaren te stellen voor onze broeders en zusters die geen werk, grond of dak hebben. Ik denk aan het creëren van waardige werkgelegenheid om de sociale plaag van werkloosheid te bestrijden, die een groot aantal gezinnen en jongeren verplettert en zeer zware gevolgen heeft voor de instandhouding van de hele samenleving”, verklaart de Paus.

Men dient op te merken dat “gebrek aan werk de waardigheid en hoop sterk ondermijnt en slechts gedeeltelijk kan gecompenseerd worden door subsidies, al zijn ze nodig, voor werklozen en hun gezin”.

De Paus pleit bijzonder voor werk en een rechtvaardig loon voor vrouwen: “Bijzondere aandacht zou moeten gegeven worden aan vrouwen – die op het domein van de werkgelegenheid helaas nog steeds gediscrimineerd worden – en bepaalde categorieën van werknemers, wiens werkomstandigheden hachelijk of gevaarlijk zijn en wiens loon niet in verhouding is met het belang van hun sociale opdracht”.

Tenslotte zou ik doeltreffende acties willen vragen om de levensomstandigheden te verbeteren van zieken, en aan allen de toegang waarborgen tot medische verzorging en geneesmiddelen die onmisbaar zijn voor het leven, met inbegrip van thuisverzorging.

Broederlijkheid in de familie van de naties

De Paus vraagt de landen de horizon van hun grenzen te verleggen, en onverschilligheid te vermijden: “Verder kijkend dan hun eigen grenzen, zijn de verantwoordelijken van de landen ook geroepen hun betrekkingen met de andere volken te opnieuw te bekijken, om effectieve participatie en betrokkenheid in het leven van de internationale gemeenschap mogelijk te maken, zodat broederlijkheid ook gerealiseerd wordt binnen de familie der volken”.

Onverschilligheid voor God

De Paus klaagt de onverschilligheid aan die geworteld is in onverschilligheid tegenover God en die heel de samenleving besmet. Hij citeert Benedictus XVI: “Onverschilligheid tegenover God overschrijdt de private en spirituele sfeer van de enkeling en nestelt zich in de publieke en sociale sfeer”. Volgens de Paus vloeit “onverschilligheid voor de naaste en de schepping voort uit onverschilligheid voor God”. Hij klaagt in het bijzonder corruptie aan in verschillende vormen van onverschilligheid: “een sociale kanker”. Pollutie “van water en lucht”, “roekeloze ontginning van bossen, vernietiging van het milieu”, of “hoe de mens met dieren omgaat”, komen uit dezelfde onverschilligheid voort en hebben “invloed op de betrekkingen met de anderen”.

Een nieuwe cultuur

Omgekeerd, engageert het sociale handelen het eeuwig leven, waarschuwt de Paus die oproept tot concrete barmhartigheid: “Barmhartigheid is het hart van God. Zij moet dus ook het hart zijn van ieder die zich als lidmaat erkent van de ene grote familie van Zijn kinderen; een hart dat hard klopt overal waar de menselijke waardigheid – weerspiegeling van Gods gelaat in Zijn schepselen – op het spel staat. Jezus waarschuwt ons: de liefde voor de anderen – vreemdelingen, zieken, gevangenen, daklozen, zelfs de vijand – is Gods maat om onze daden te oordelen. Daarvan hangt onze eeuwige bestemming af”.

De Paus pleit voor universele solidariteit: “Solidariteit bestaat in de morele en sociale houding die het best beantwoordt aan de bewustwording van de wonden van onze tijd en de steeds toenemende, ontegensprekelijke en onderlinge afhankelijkheid”.

Hij wijst op de collectieve verantwoordelijkheid, met inbegrip van het onderwijs en de opleiding van jongeren. Daarom vraagt Paus Franciscus een nieuwe cultuur, “van solidariteit, barmhartigheid en medelijden”. Volgens de Paus kan geen enkele sociale categorie, NGO, Kerk, media ... zich aan die uitdaging onttrekken”.

Overgenomen met toestemming van [RK Documenten.nl](http://RKDocumenten.nl)

[Bekijk dit document in de context van andere R.K. documenten op de website van RK Documenten.nl](#)

Stel zoals Maria vertrouwen in de barmhartige Jezus: doe wat Hij u opdraagt

Boodschap van Paus Franciscus voor de 24ste Wereld Ziekendag 2016



15 september 2015

Pope Francis

Entrusting Oneself to the Merciful Jesus like Mary: "Do whatever he tells you" (Jn 2:5)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The twenty-fourth World Day of the Sick offers me an opportunity to draw particularly close to you, dear friends who are ill, and to those who care for you.

This year, since the Day of the Sick will be solemnly celebrated in the Holy Land, I wish to propose a meditation on the Gospel account of the wedding feast of Cana (Jn 2: 1-11), where Jesus performed his first miracle through the intervention of his Mother. The theme chosen – Entrusting Oneself to the Merciful Jesus like Mary: "Do whatever he tells you" (Jn 2:5) is quite fitting in light of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy. The main Eucharistic celebration of the Day will take place on 11 February 2016, the liturgical memorial of Our Lady of Lourdes, in Nazareth itself, where "the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (Jn 1:14). In Nazareth, Jesus began his salvific mission, applying to himself the words of the Prophet Isaiah, as we are told by the Evangelist Luke: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord" (Lk 4:18-19).

Illness, above all grave illness, always places human existence in crisis and brings with it questions that dig deep. Our first response may at times be one of rebellion: Why has this happened to me? We can feel desperate, thinking that all is lost, that things no longer have meaning...

In these situations, faith in God is on the one hand tested, yet at the same time can reveal all of its positive resources. Not because faith makes illness, pain, or the questions which they raise, disappear, but because it offers a key by which we can discover the deepest meaning of what we are experiencing; a key that helps us to see how illness can be the way to draw nearer to Jesus who walks at our side, weighed down by the Cross. And this key is given to us by Mary, our Mother, who has known this way at first hand.

At the wedding feast of Cana, Mary is the thoughtful woman who sees a serious problem for the spouses: the wine, the symbol of the joy of the feast, has run out. Mary recognizes the difficulty, in some way makes it her own, and acts swiftly and discreetly. She does not simply look on, much less spend time in finding fault, but rather, she turns to Jesus and presents him with the concrete problem: "They have no wine" (Jn 2:3). And when Jesus tells her that it is not yet the time for him to reveal himself (cf. v. 4), she says to the servants: "Do whatever he tells you" (v. 5). Jesus then performs the miracle, turning water into wine, a wine that immediately appears to be the best of the whole celebration. What teaching can we draw from this mystery of the wedding feast of Cana for the World Day of the Sick?

The wedding feast of Cana is an image of the Church: at the centre there is Jesus who in his mercy performs a sign; around him are the disciples, the first fruits of the new community; and beside Jesus and the disciples is Mary, the provident and prayerful Mother. Mary partakes of the joy of ordinary people and helps it to increase; she intercedes with her Son on behalf of the spouses and all the invited guests. Nor does Jesus refuse the request of his Mother. How much hope there is in that event for all of us! We have a Mother with benevolent and watchful eyes, like her Son; a heart that is maternal and full of mercy, like him; hands that want to help, like the hands of Jesus who broke bread for those who were hungry, touched the sick and healed them. All this fills us with trust and opens our hearts to the grace and mercy of Christ. Mary's intercession makes us experience the consolation for which the apostle Paul blesses God: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and God of all encouragement, who encourages us in our affliction, so that we may be

able to encourage those who are in any affliction with the encouragement with which we ourselves are encouraged by God. For as Christ's sufferings overflow to us, so through Christ does our encouragement also overflow" (2 Cor 1:3-5). Mary is the "comforted" Mother who comforts her children.

At Cana the distinctive features of Jesus and his mission are clearly seen: he comes to the help of those in difficulty and need. Indeed, in the course of his messianic ministry he would heal many people of illnesses, infirmities and evil spirits, give sight to the blind, make the lame walk, restore health and dignity to lepers, raise the dead, and proclaim the good news to the poor (cf. Lk 7:21-22). Mary's request at the wedding feast, suggested by the Holy Spirit to her maternal heart, clearly shows not only Jesus' messianic power but also his mercy.

In Mary's concern we see reflected the tenderness of God. This same tenderness is present in the lives of all those persons who attend the sick and understand their needs, even the most imperceptible ones, because they look upon them with eyes full of love. How many times has a mother at the bedside of her sick child, or a child caring for an elderly parent, or a grandchild concerned for a grandparent, placed his or her prayer in the hands of Our Lady! For our loved ones who suffer because of illness we ask first for their health. Jesus himself showed the presence of the Kingdom of God specifically through his healings: "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the good news proclaimed to them" (Mt 11:4-5). But love animated by faith makes us ask for them something greater than physical health: we ask for peace, a serenity in life that comes from the heart and is God's gift, the fruit of the Holy Spirit, a gift which the Father never denies to those who ask him for it with trust.

In the scene of Cana, in addition to Jesus and his Mother, there are the "servants", whom she tells: "Do whatever he tells you" (Jn 2:5). Naturally, the miracle takes place as the work of Christ; however, he wants to employ human assistance in performing this miracle. He could have made the wine appear directly in the jars. But he wants to rely upon human cooperation, and so he asks the servants to fill them with water. How wonderful and pleasing to God it is to be servants of others! This more than anything else makes us like Jesus, who "did not come to be served but to serve" (Mk 10:45). These unnamed people in the Gospel teach us a great deal. Not only do they obey, but they obey generously: they fill the jars to the brim (cf. Jn 2:7). They trust the Mother and carry out immediately and well what they are asked to do, without complaining, without second thoughts.

On this World Day of the Sick let us ask Jesus in his mercy, through the intercession of Mary, his Mother and ours, to grant to all of us this same readiness to be serve those in need, and, in particular, our infirm brothers and sisters. At times this service can be tiring and burdensome, yet we are certain that the Lord will surely turn our human efforts into something divine. We too can be hands, arms and hearts which help God to perform his miracles, so often hidden. We too, whether healthy or sick, can offer up our toil and sufferings like the water which filled the jars at the wedding feast of Cana and was turned into the finest wine. By quietly helping those who suffer, as in illness itself, we take our daily cross upon our shoulders and follow the Master (cf. Lk 9:23). Even though the experience of suffering will always remain a mystery, Jesus helps us to reveal its meaning.

If we can learn to obey the words of Mary, who says: "Do whatever he tells you", Jesus will always change the water of our lives into precious wine. Thus this World Day of the Sick, solemnly celebrated in the Holy Land, will help fulfil the hope which I expressed in the Bull of Indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy: 'I trust that this Jubilee year celebrating the mercy of God will foster an encounter with [Judaism and Islam] and with other noble religious traditions; may it open us to even more fervent dialogue so that we might know and understand one another better; may it eliminate every form of closed-mindedness and disrespect, and drive out every form of violence and discrimination' (Misericordiae Vultus, 23). Every hospital and nursing home can be a visible sign

and setting in which to promote the culture of encounter and peace, where the experience of illness and suffering, along with professional and fraternal assistance, helps to overcome every limitation and division.

For this we are set an example by the two Religious Sisters who were canonized last May: Saint Marie-Alphonsine Danil Ghattas and Saint Mary of Jesus Crucified Baouardy, both daughters of the Holy Land. The first was a witness to meekness and unity, who bore clear witness to the importance of being responsible for one another, living in service to one another. The second, a humble and illiterate woman, was docile to the Holy Spirit and became an instrument of encounter with the Muslim world.

To all those who assist the sick and the suffering I express my confident hope that they will draw inspiration from Mary, the Mother of Mercy. “May the sweetness of her countenance watch over us in this Holy Year, so that all of us may rediscover the joy of God’s tenderness” (ibid., 24), allow it to dwell in our hearts and express it in our actions! Let us entrust to the Virgin Mary our trials and tribulations, together with our joys and consolations. Let us beg her to turn her eyes of mercy towards us, especially in times of pain, and make us worthy of beholding, today and always, the merciful face of her Son Jesus!

With this prayer for all of you, I send my Apostolic Blessing.

From the Vatican, 15 September 2015

Memorial of Our Lady of Sorrows

“You are the flesh of Christ crucified that we have the honor to touch and to serve with love”

Pope’s Address to the Sick and Disabled in Turin



22 juni 2015
Paus Franciscus

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I could not come to Turin without stopping in this House: the Little House of Divine Providence, founded almost two centuries ago by Saint Giuseppe Benedetto Cottolengo. Inspired in the merciful love of God the Father and trusting totally in His Providence, he took in poor, abandoned and sick people who could not be received in the hospitals of that time.

The exclusion of the poor and the difficulty of the indigent to receive assistance and the necessary care is a situation that, unfortunately, is also present today. Great progress has been made in medicine and in social care, however a throwaway culture has also spread, as a consequence of an anthropological crisis that no longer puts man but consumption and economic interests at the center (Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii

gaudium, 52-53).

Among the victims of this disposable culture I would like to remember here the elderly, numerous of whom are received in this House — the elderly who are the memory and wisdom of peoples. Their longevity is not always seen as a gift of God, but sometimes as a weight that is difficult to sustain, especially when their health is strongly compromised. This mentality does not do good to society, and it is our task to develop “anti-bodies” against this way of regarding the elderly or persons with disabilities, as if they were lives no longer worthy of being lived. This is sin; it is a grave social sin. Instead, with what tenderness the Cottolengo has loved these persons! Here we can learn another way of looking at life and at the human person!

The Cottolengo has meditated long on the evangelical page of Jesus’ Last Judgment, Matthew’s chapter 25. And it has not remained deaf to Jesus’ appeals to be fed, quenched, clothed and visited. Pushed by the charity of Christ, it began a Work of charity in which the Word of God has demonstrated all its fruitfulness (cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, 233). From him we can learn the concreteness of evangelical love, so that many poor and sick can find a “house,” live as in a family, feel that they belong to the community and not excluded and endured.

Dear sick brothers, you are precious members of the Church; you are the flesh of Christ crucified that we have the honor to touch and to serve with love. With Jesus’ grace you can be witnesses and apostles of the Divine Mercy that saves the world. Looking at Christ crucified, full of love for us, and also with the help of all those who take care of you, may you find the strength and consolation to carry your cross every day.

The *raison d’être* of this Little House is not welfarism or philanthropy but the Gospel: the Gospel of the love of Christ is the force that gave it birth and makes it go forward: Jesus’ love of predilection for the most fragile and weak. This is at the center. Therefore, a work such as this does not go forward without prayer, which is the first and most important work of the Little House, as your Founder loved to repeat (cf. *Detti e pensieri*, n. 24), and as the six convents of Sisters of contemplative life demonstrate, which are linked to the Work itself

I want to thank the Sisters, the consecrated Brothers and the Priests present here at Turin and in your Houses scattered throughout the world. Together with the many lay workers, the volunteers and the “Friends of Cottolengo,” you are called to continue the mission of this great Saint of charity with creative fidelity. His charism is fecund, as demonstrated also by the Blessed Don Francesco Paleari and Friar Luigi Bordino, as well as the Servant of God Sister Maria Carola Cecchin, missionary.

May the Holy Spirit give you always the strength and the courage to follow their example and to witness joyfully the charity of Christ that drives one to serve the weakest, thus contributing to the growth of the Kingdom of God and of a more hospitable and fraternal world.

I bless you all. May Our Lady protect you. And, please, do not forget to pray for me.

At the end of his meeting with the sick, the Holy Father went to the inner courtyard and greeted all those who did not find a place in the church and he spoke the following words off-the-cuff:

I greet you all, my heartfelt greeting to you! I thank you so much, so much for what you do for the sick, for the elderly and for what you do with tenderness, with so much love. I thank you so much and I ask you to pray for me, pray for the Church, pray for the children that are learning the catechism, pray for the children who are making their First Communion, pray for the parents, for the families, but from here pray for the Church, pray that the Lord may send priests, send Sisters, to do this work — so much work! And now we pray together to Our Lady and then I will give you the blessing. {Hail Mary}

Vertaling: ZENIT

Eenzaamheid is meest zorgwekkende aandoening van ouderen

“Abandonment is the gravest sickness of the elderly, and also the greatest injustice they can suffer”



Toespraak van Paus Franciscus tot de deelnemers van de 21ste Plenaire Vergadering van de Pauselijke Academie voor het Leven, “Assistance to the Elderly and Palliative Care”

5 maart 2015
Paus Franciscus

Geliefde broeder en zusters,

Ik groet u hartelijk bij gelegenheid van uw Algemene vergadering, die is bijeengeroepen om na te denken over het thema: “Hulp voor de ouderen en palliatieve zorg”. Ik dank de president voor zijn vriendelijke woorden. Ik wil graag in het bijzonder Kardinaal Sgreccia verwelkomen, die hierin een pionier is. Dank u.

De palliatieve zorg is de uitdrukking van de echt menselijke houding om de zorg voor een ander op zich te nemen, in het bijzonder van wie lijdt. Het is het bewijs dat de menselijke persoon altijd kostbaar blijft, ook als die getekend is door ouderdom en ziekte. Inderdaad de persoon, in welke omstandigheden hij ook verkeert, is een goed, voor zichzelf en voor de anderen en wordt door God bemind. Daardoor voelen we de verantwoordelijkheid hem bij te staan en zo goed mogelijk te begeleiden wanneer zijn leven erg broos wordt en wanneer de voltooiing van het aardse bestaan nadert.

Het Bijbelse gebod dat ons vraagt om onze ouders te eren herinnert ons in brede zin aan de eer die we verschuldigd zijn aan alle ouderen. God heeft een dubbele belofte aan dit gebod verbonden: “Opdat ge lang moogt leven” (Ex 20,12) en “gelukkig zijn” (Deut 5, 16). De trouw aan het vierde gebod verzekert ons niet alleen van de gave van de aarde maar bovenal van de mogelijkheid ervan te genieten. Inderdaad, de wijsheid die ons de waarde van de bejaarde persoon doet erkennen en ons er toe brengt haar te eren is dezelfde wijsheid die ons met instemming doet waarderen de talrijke gaven die we dagelijks uit de hand van de Vader, van zijn voorzienigheid ontvangen en daardoor gelukkig zijn. Het gebod onthult ons de fundamentele opvoedkundige betrekking tussen ouders en kinderen, de ouderen en de jongeren onder verwijzing naar de bewaking en de overdracht van het godsdienstige onderricht en de wijsheid aan de komende generaties. Het in ere houden van dit onderricht en hen die het overdragen is een bron van leven en van zegen.

Daarentegen bevat de Bijbel bewaart een ernstige waarschuwing voor hen die hun ouders verwaarlozen of mishandelen (vgl. Ex 21, 17; Lev 20, 9). Datzelfde oordeel geldt vandaag wanneer de ouders, als zij oud en minder nuttig zijn geworden, gemarginaliseerd worden tot verwaarlozing toe; hoeveel voorbeelden hebben we daar niet van!

Het woord van God is altijd levend en we zien heel goed welke vooraanstaande plaats het gebod inneemt in de harde realiteit van de hedendaagse maatschappij, waar de logica van de nuttigheid de overhand heeft over die

van de solidariteit en de vrijgevigheid, zelfs binnen de gezinnen. Laten we daarom met een volgzaam hart luisteren naar het woord van God, dat tot ons komt in de geboden die, laten we dat steeds bedenken, geen knellende banden zijn maar woorden van leven.

“Eren” kan vandaag de dag zuiver vertaald worden als: het moeten hebben van een groot respect en de zorg op zich nemen voor hen die door hun fysieke of maatschappelijke situatie dreigen te worden alleen gelaten om te sterven of te doen sterven. De gehele geneeskunde heeft binnen de maatschappij een speciale rol als getuige van de eer die we verschuldigd zijn aan de oudere persoon en aan ieder menselijk wezen. Wetenschappelijk bewijs en doelmatigheid kunnen niet de enige criteria zijn die het handelen van de artsen regeren, evenmin als de voorschriften van de gezondheidsorganisatie en het economische voordeel. Een staat mag niet denken dat hij aan de gezondheidszorg kan verdienen. In tegendeel, geen plicht is voor een maatschappij belangrijker dan het bewaken van de menselijke persoon.

Uw bent de komende dagen bezig met het onderzoek van nieuwe gebieden voor de toepassing van palliatieve zorg. Tot nu toe bestonden die in een waardevolle begeleiding van de oncologische patiënten, maar vandaag zijn er vele aandoeningen, vaak gebonden aan de ouderdom, gekenmerkt door een chronische progressieve achteruitgang, die baat kunnen hebben bij dit type zorg. De ouderen hebben in de eerste plaats de zorg van hun familieleden nodig wier genegenheid niet vervangen kan worden door een meer efficiënte organisatie of door nog meer competente en liefdevolle werkers in de gezondheidszorg. Wanneer de ouderen niet meer zelfstandig kunnen leven of gevorderde of terminale ziekten hebben dan moeten ze kunnen genieten van werkelijk menselijke hulp en adequate antwoorden ontvangen op hun noden dank zij de palliatieve zorg die geboden wordt ter completering en ondersteuning van de zorg die de familie geeft. De palliatieve zorg heeft tot doel het lijden in de finale fase van de ziekte te verlichten en tegelijkertijd de zieke te verzekeren van een werkelijk menselijke begeleiding (vgl. Encycliek *Evangelium vitae*, 65). Het is een belangrijke ondersteuning vooral voor de ouderen, zij die op grond van hun leeftijd steeds minder aandacht krijgen van de curatieve geneeskunde en vaak in de steek gelaten worden. Het in de steek gelaten worden is de ernstigste “ziekte” van de oudere en ook de grootste onrechtvaardigheid die hem kan overkomen. Zij die ons hebben geholpen op te groeien mogen niet in de steek gelaten worden wanneer ze behoefte hebben aan onze hulp, onze liefde en onze tederheid.

Daarom waardeer ik uw wetenschappelijke en culturele inzet om te verzekeren dat de palliatieve zorg allen kan bereiken die haar nodig hebben. Ik moedig de professionals en de studenten aan om zich te specialiseren in dit type zorg, dat niet minder waarde heeft omdat het “geen levens redt”. De palliatieve zorg verwerkelijkt iets dat even belangrijk is: de versterking van persoon. Ik spoor allen aan die zich om verschillende redenen inzetten op het gebied van de palliatieve zorg, om die inzet ten uitvoer te brengen in een geest van dienstbaarheid en te bedenken dat alle medische kennis pas echt wetenschap is in de edelste betekenis, als zij zich opstelt als hulp met het oog op het goed van de mens, een goed dat nooit bereikt kan worden in strijd met zijn leven en zijn waardigheid.

Het is dit vermogen van dienst aan het leven en aan de waardigheid van de zieke persoon, ook als die oud is, dat een maat is voor de ware vooruitgang van de geneeskunde en van de hele maatschappij. Ik herhaal de oproep van de heilige Johannes Paulus II: “respecteer, verdedig, bemin en dien het leven, elk menselijk leven! Alleen langs die weg zul je rechtvaardigheid, vooruitgang, ware vrijheid, vrede en geluk vinden!” (ibid., 5).

Ik wens u toe dat u uw studie en onderzoek moogt voortzetten, opdat het werk van de bevordering en de verdediging van het leven steeds doeltreffender en vruchtbaarder moge zijn. Daarbij helpe u de Moedermaagd, Moeder van het leven en daarbij begeleide u mijn apostolische zegen. Vergeet alstublieft niet voor mij te bidden. Dank u.

Nederlandse vertaling: J.A. Raymakers

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I warmly welcome you on the occasion of your General Assembly, called to reflect on the theme “Assistance to the elderly and palliative care”, and I thank the President for his kind words. I am especially pleased to greet Cardinal Sgreccia, who is a pioneer.... Thank you.

Palliative care is an expression of the truly human attitude of taking care of one another, especially of those who suffer. It is a testimony that the human person is always precious, even if marked by illness and old age. Indeed, the person, under any circumstances, is an asset to him/herself and to others and is loved by God. This is why, when their life becomes very fragile and the end of their earthly existence approaches, we feel the responsibility to assist and accompany them in the best way.

The biblical Commandment that calls us to honour our parents, reminds us in a broader sense of the honour that we owe to all elderly people. God associates with this Commandment a twofold promise: “that your days may be long” (Ex 20:12) and the other — “that it may go well with you” (Dt 5:16). Faithfulness to the fourth Commandment ensures not only the gift of land but the opportunity to enjoy it. Indeed, the wisdom that enables us to recognize the value of our elders and leads us to honour them, is the same wisdom that allows us to happily appreciate the many gifts we receive every day from the provident hand of the Father.

This precept shows us the fundamental pedagogical relationship between parents and children, between old and young, regarding the safekeeping and passing on of wisdom and religious teaching to future generations. To honour this teaching and those who transmit it is a source of life and blessing. On the contrary, the Bible reserves a severe admonition for those who neglect or mistreat their parents (cf. Ex 21:17; Lev 20:9). The same judgement applies today when parents, becoming aged and less useful, are marginalized to the point of abandonment; and we have so many examples of this!

The word of God is ever living and we clearly see how the Commandment proves central for contemporary society, where the logic of usefulness takes precedence over that of solidarity and of gratuitousness, even within the family. Therefore, let us listen with docile hearts to the word of God that comes to us from the Commandments which, let us always remember, are not bonds that imprison, but are words of life.

Today “to honour” could also be translated as the duty to have the utmost respect and to take care of those who, due to their physical or social condition, may be left to die or “made to die”. All of medicine has a special role within society as a witness to the honour that we owe to the elderly person and to each human being. Evidence and effectiveness cannot be the only criteria that govern physicians’ actions, nor can health system regulations and economic profits. A state cannot think about earning with medicine. On the contrary, there is no duty more important for a society than that of safeguarding the human person.

Your work during these days has been to explore new fields of application for palliative care. It has until now been a precious accompaniment for cancer patients, but today there is a great variety of diseases characterized by chronic progressive deterioration, often linked to old age, which can benefit from this type of assistance. The elderly need in the first place the care of their family members — whose affection cannot be replaced by even the most efficient structures or the most skilled and charitable healthcare workers. When not self-sufficient or having advanced or terminal disease, the elderly can enjoy truly human assistance and have their needs adequately met thanks to palliative care offered in conjunction with the supportive care given by family members. The objective of palliative care is to alleviate suffering in the final stages of illness and at the same time to ensure the patient appropriate human accompaniment (cf. Encyclical *Evangelium Vitae*, n. 65). It is

important support especially for the elderly, who, because of their age, receive increasingly less attention from curative medicine and are often abandoned. Abandonment is the most serious “illness” of the elderly, and also the greatest injustice they can be submitted to: those who have helped us grow must not be abandoned when they are in need of our help, our love and our tenderness.

Thus I appreciate your scientific and cultural commitment to ensuring that palliative care may reach all those who need it. I encourage professionals and students to specialize in this type of assistance which is no less valuable for the fact that it “is not life-saving”. Palliative care accomplishes something equally important: it values the person. I exhort all those who, in various ways, are involved in the field of palliative care, to practice this task keeping the spirit of service intact and remembering that all medical knowledge is truly science, in its noblest significance, only if used as aid in view of the good of man, a good which is never accomplished “against” the life and dignity of man.

It is this ability to serve life and the dignity of the sick, also when they are old, that is the true measure of medicine and society as a whole. I repeat St John Paul II’s appeal: “respect, protect, love and serve life, every human life! Only in this direction will you find justice, development, true freedom, peace and happiness! (ibid., n. 5).

I hope you continue this study and research, so that the work of the advancement and defence of life may be ever more effective and fruitful. May the Virgin Mother, Mother of life, accompany my Blessing. Please, do not forget to pray for me. Thank you.