



Sapientia Cordis: “I was eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame”

Message for the 23rd World Day of the Sick 2015

3 december 2014

Pope Francis



Dear Brothers and Sisters,

On this, the twenty-third World Day of the Sick, begun by Saint John Paul II, I turn to all of you who are burdened by illness and are united in various ways to the flesh of the suffering Christ, as well as to you, professionals and volunteers in the field of health care.

This year's theme invites us to reflect on a phrase from the Book of Job: “I was eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame” (Job 29:15). I would like to consider this phrase from the perspective of “sapientia cordis” – the wisdom of the heart.

1. This “wisdom” is no theoretical, abstract knowledge, the product of reasoning. Rather, it is, as Saint James describes it in his Letter, “pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, without uncertainty or insincerity” (3:17). It is a way of seeing things infused by the Holy Spirit in the minds and the hearts of those who are sensitive to the sufferings of their brothers and sisters and who can see in them the image of God. So let us take up the prayer of the Psalmist: “Teach us to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom” (Ps 90:12). This “sapientia cordis”, which is a gift of God, is a compendium of the fruits of the World Day of the Sick.

2. Wisdom of the heart means serving our brothers and sisters. Job's words: “I was eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame”, point to the service which this just man, who enjoyed a certain authority and a position of importance amongst the elders of his city, offered to those in need. His moral grandeur found expression in the help he gave to the poor who sought his help and in his care for orphans and widows (Job 29:12-13).

Today too, how many Christians show, not by their words but by lives rooted in a genuine faith, that they are “eyes to the blind” and “feet to the lame”! They are close to the sick in need of constant care and help in washing, dressing and eating. This service, especially when it is protracted, can become tiring and burdensome. It is relatively easy to help someone for a few days but it is difficult to look after a person for months or even years, in some cases when he or she is no longer capable of expressing gratitude. And yet, what a great path of sanctification this is! In those difficult moments we can rely in a special way on the closeness of the Lord, and we become a special means of support for the Church's mission.

3. Wisdom of the heart means being with our brothers and sisters. Time spent with the sick is holy time. It is a way of praising God who conforms us to the image of his Son, who “came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mt 20:28). Jesus himself said: “I am among you as one who serves” (Lk 22:27).

With lively faith let us ask the Holy Spirit to grant us the grace to appreciate the value of our often unspoken



willingness to spend time with these sisters and brothers who, thanks to our closeness and affection, feel more loved and comforted. How great a lie, on the other hand, lurks behind certain phrases which so insist on the importance of “quality of life” that they make people think that lives affected by grave illness are not worth living!

4. Wisdom of the heart means going forth from ourselves towards our brothers and sisters. Occasionally our world forgets the special value of time spent at the bedside of the sick, since we are in such a rush; caught up as we are in a frenzy of doing, of producing, we forget about giving ourselves freely, taking care of others, being responsible for others. Behind this attitude there is often a lukewarm faith which has forgotten the Lord’s words: “You did it unto me” (Mt 25:40).

For this reason, I would like once again to stress “the absolute priority of ‘going forth from ourselves toward our brothers and sisters’ as one of the two great commandments which ground every moral norm and as the clearest sign for discerning spiritual growth in response to God’s completely free gift” (Evangeli Gaudium, 179). The missionary nature of the Church is the wellspring of an “effective charity and a compassion which understands, assists and promotes” (ibid).

5. Wisdom of the heart means showing solidarity with our brothers and sisters while not judging them. Charity takes time. Time to care for the sick and time to visit them. Time to be at their side like Job’s friends: “And they sat with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his suffering was very great” (Job 2:13). Yet Job’s friends harboured a judgement against him: they thought that Job’s misfortune was a punishment from God for his sins. True charity is a sharing which does not judge, which does not demand the conversion of others; it is free of that false humility which, deep down, seeks praise and is self-satisfied about whatever good it does.

Job’s experience of suffering finds its genuine response only in the cross of Jesus, the supreme act of God’s solidarity with us, completely free and abounding in mercy. This response of love to the drama of human pain, especially innocent suffering, remains for ever impressed on the body of the risen Christ; his glorious wounds are a scandal for faith but also the proof of faith (cf. Homily for the Canonization of John XXIII and John Paul II, 27 April 2014).

Even when illness, loneliness and inability make it hard for us to reach out to others, the experience of suffering can become a privileged means of transmitting grace and a source for gaining and growing in sapientia cordis. We come to understand how Job, at the end of his experience, could say to God: “I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you” (42:5). People immersed in the mystery of suffering and pain, when they accept these in faith, can themselves become living witnesses of a faith capable of embracing suffering, even without being able to understand its full meaning.

6. I entrust this World Day of the Sick to the maternal protection of Mary, who conceived and gave birth to Wisdom incarnate: Jesus Christ, our Lord.

O Mary, Seat of Wisdom, intercede as our Mother for all the sick and for those who care for them! Grant that, through our service of our suffering neighbours, and through the experience of suffering itself, we may receive and cultivate true wisdom of heart!

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

From the Vatican, 3 December 2014

Memorial of Saint Francis Xavier



FRANCIS

Paus veroordeelt abortus, euthanasie en IVF als 'zonden tegen God'

Katholiek Nieuwsblad, 16 november 2014

[KatholiekNieuwsblad](#)

De paus zei dat zaterdag tegen vierduizend artsen van de Katholieke Vereniging van Italiaanse artsen. Die waren in het Vaticaan voor een bijzondere audiëntie met de paus in verband met het 70-jarig jubileum van de vereniging.

'Zorg lijkt af te nemen'

De paus benadrukte in zijn toespraak dat elk menselijk leven, ongeacht de omstandigheden, heilig is en dat "spelen met het leven", zoals abortus, euthanasie en ivf, zondig is. Ondanks de wetenschappelijke en technische ontwikkelingen waardoor de mogelijkheden tot lichamelijke genezing zijn toegenomen, lijkt het erop, zei de paus, dat "in onze tijd" de zorg voor de persoon lijkt af te nemen, "vooral wanneer hij ziek, zwak en hulpeloos is".

Volgens de paus kunnen de verworvenheden van de wetenschap en de geneeskunde bijdragen "aan de verbetering van het menselijk leven in de mate waarin ze niet gedistantieerd zijn van het ethische fundament van deze disciplines".

'Diepere dimensie van het bestaan'

De paus zei dat "aandacht voor het menselijk leven" en in het bijzonder voor "de zieken, ouderen en kinderen" ten diepste tot de missie van de Kerk behoort. "De Kerk voelt zich ook geroepen deel te nemen in het debat dat betrekking heeft op het menselijk leven en voorstellen te doen gebaseerd op het Evangelie", aldus Franciscus.

Volgens de paus wordt tegenwoordig "de kwaliteit van het leven vooral gerelateerd aan economische middelen" en aan "het 'welzijn', de schoonheid en het genot van het fysieke". Daarmee wordt vergeten dat er een "andere, diepere dimensie van het bestaan" is, "een interpersoonlijke, spirituele en religieuze", aldus Franciscus.

'Leven is altijd heilig'

"In het licht van het geloof en de juiste reden is menselijk leven altijd heilig en van kwaliteit", zei de paus. "Elk menselijk leven is heilig. Het ene leven is niet kwalitatief belangrijker dan het andere, enkel op grond van middelen, rechten of sociale en economische kansen."

'Evangelie gaat verder dan eed van Hippocrates'

Franciscus zei tegen de artsen dat zij in hun werk "door woord en voorbeeld" kunnen getuigen dat het "menselijk leven heilig, waardevol en onschendbaar" is en dat het "als zodanig moet worden bemind, verdedigd en verzorgd". De paus hield de artsen voor dat de eed van Hippocrates hun verplicht "om altijd dienaren van het leven" te zijn, maar dat het Evangelie verder gaat en laat zien om van het leven "te houden wat er ook gebeurt" en in het bijzonder "wanneer het behoefte heeft speciale zorg en aandacht".

'Valse compassie'



Franciscus waarschuwde de artsen voor de “valse compassie” die “het dominante denken” soms suggereert.

De paus verduidelijkte dat dit zich uit in de moderne opvattingen over het toestaan van abortus, het “verkrijgen van euthanasie, als een daad van waardigheid”, het ‘produceren’ van een kind als een recht en een wetenschappelijke doorbraak “in plaats van een cadeau” en over het gebruik van mensenlevens als proefkonijn “om anderen te redden”.

‘Spelen met het leven’

“Trouw zijn aan het Evangelie van het leven en respect voor het leven als geschenk van God, vraagt moedige keuzes die ingaan tegen huidige opvattingen, die gewetensbezwaren kunnen opleveren. Deze trouw heeft sociale consequenties. We leven in een tijd waarin geëxperimenteerd wordt met het leven. Het is een slecht experiment. Het ‘maken’ van kinderen in plaats van ze te aanvaarden als een geschenk is spelen met het leven. Wees voorzichtig, omdat dit een zonde is tegen de Schepper, tegen God de Schepper, die alles zo geschapen heeft”, aldus Franciscus.

‘Wetenschappelijk probleem’

De paus vertelde de artsen dat hij als priester vaak bezwaren hoorde over en de vraag kreeg waarom de Kerk bijvoorbeeld tegen abortus is. Volgens de paus is het geen religieus en filosofisch probleem, maar een “wetenschappelijk probleem, omdat het niet geoorloofd is een menselijk leven te doden om een probleem op te lossen”.

‘Denk goed na’

De paus vertelde dat hij op de tegenwerping “maar nee, het moderne denken” antwoordde: “luister, in het oude denken en het moderne denken betekent het woord ‘dood’ hetzelfde. Hetzelfde geldt voor euthanasie. We weten allemaal dat er in de huidige wegwerpcultuur, met zoveel oude mensen, verborgen euthanasie is. Andersom zijn er ook mensen die tegen God zeggen: ‘nee, ik zal het levenseinde bereiken op de manier zoals ik dat wil’. Een zonde tegen God de Schepper. Denk hier goed over na”, aldus de paus.

I welcome you on the occasion of the seventieth anniversary of the founding of the Association of Italian Catholic Doctors. In particular, I address a cordial greeting to the chaplain, Msgr. Edward Menichelli, to Cardinal Fiorenzo Angelini, who for decades has followed the life of the Association, and to the President, whom I thank for the words with which he introduced this meeting. With gratitude, I greet the Minister of Health, Mrs. Beatrice Lorenzin. And with great affection, I welcome these sick children and their families.

There is no doubt that, in our time, due to scientific and technical advancements, the possibilities for physical healing have significantly increased; and yet, in some respects it seems the ability to “take care” of the person has decreased, especially when he is sick, frail and helpless. In fact, the achievements of science and of medicine can contribute to the improvement of human life to the extent that they are not distanced from the ethical root of these disciplines. For this reason, you Catholic doctors are committed to live your profession as a human and spiritual mission, as a real lay apostolate.

Attention to human life, especially that in greatest difficulty, that is, to the sick, the elderly, children, deeply involves the mission of the Church. The Church also feels called to participate in the debate that relates to human life, presenting its proposal based on the Gospel. In many places, the quality of life is related primarily to economic means, to “well-being”, to the beauty and enjoyment of the physical, forgetting other more profound dimensions of existence — interpersonal, spiritual and religious. In fact, in the light of faith and right reason, human life is always sacred and always “of quality”. There is no human life that is more sacred than another — every human life is sacred — just as there is no human life qualitatively more significant than another, only by



virtue of resources, rights, great social and economic opportunities.

This is what you, Catholic doctors, try to say, first of all with your professionalism. Your work wants to witness by word and by example that human life is always sacred, valuable and inviolable. And as such, it must be loved, defended and cared for. Your professionalism, enriched with the spirit of faith, is one more reason to work with those— even from different religious perspectives or thought—who recognize the dignity of the human person as a criterion for their activities. In fact, if the Hippocratic Oath commits you to always be servants of life, the Gospel pushes you further: to love it no matter what, especially when it is in need of special care and attention. This is what the members of your Association have done over seventy years of fine work. I urge you to continue with humility and trust on this road, striving to pursue your statutory goals of implementing the teaching of the Magisterium of the Church in the field of medical ethics.

The dominant thinking sometimes suggests a “false compassion”, that which believes that it is: helpful to women to promote abortion; an act of dignity to obtain euthanasia; a scientific breakthrough to “produce” a child and to consider it to be a right rather than a gift to welcome; or to use human lives as guinea pigs presumably to save others. Instead, the compassion of the Gospel is that which accompanies in times of need, that is, the compassion of the Good Samaritan, who “sees”, “has compassion”, approaches and provides concrete help (cf. Lk 10:33). Your mission as doctors puts you in daily contact with many forms of suffering. I encourage you to take them on as “Good Samaritans”, caring in a special way for the elderly, the infirm and the disabled. Fidelity to the Gospel of life and respect for life as a gift from God sometimes require choices that are courageous and go against the current, which in particular circumstances, may become points of conscientious objection. And this fidelity entails many social consequences. We are living in a time of experimentation with life. But a bad experiment. Making children rather than accepting them as a gift, as I said. Playing with life. Be careful, because this is a sin against the Creator: against God the Creator, who created things this way. When so many times in my life as a priest I have heard objections: “But tell me, why the Church is opposed to abortion, for example? Is it a religious problem?” No, no. It is not a religious problem. “Is it a philosophical problem?” No, it is not a philosophical problem. It’s a scientific problem, because there is a human life there, and it is not lawful to take out a human life to solve a problem. “But no, modern thought...” But, listen, in ancient thought and modern thought, the word “kill” means the same thing. The same evaluation applies to euthanasia: we all know that with so many old people, in this culture of waste, there is this hidden euthanasia. But there is also the other. And this is to say to God, “No, I will accomplish the end of life, as I will.” A sin against God the Creator! Think hard about this.

I hope the seventy years of your association will stimulate a further process of growth and maturation. May you work constructively with all the people and institutions who share your love of life and seek to serve it in its dignity, sanctity and inviolability. St. Camillus de Lellis, in suggesting the most effective method in caring for the sick, would simply say: “Put more heart into those hands.” Put more heart in these hands! This is also my hope. May the Blessed Virgin Mary, *Salus infirmorum*, support the intentions with which you intend to continue your action. I ask you to please pray for me and I give you my heartfelt blessing.

Respect voor de Schepping



Vijfde catechese in de reeks over de zeven gaven van de Heilige Geest: Kennis



21 mei 2014

Paus Franciscus

Geliefde broers en zussen, goede dag.

Vandaag zou ik schijnwerper willen richten op een andere gave van de Heilige Geest, de gave van kennis. Wanneer over kennis gesproken wordt, denkt men onmiddellijk aan het vermogen van de mens om altijd beter de werkelijkheid die hem omgeeft te kennen en de wetten te ontdekken die de natuur en het heelal ordenen. De kennis die van de Heilige Geest komt, beperkt zich echter niet tot de menselijke kennis: het is een bijzondere gave, die ons ertoe brengt, via de schepping, de grootheid en de liefde van God en zijn diepe verbondenheid met elk schepsel, te vatten.

1. Wanneer onze ogen door de Heilige Geest verlicht worden, openen ze zich voor de contemplatie van God in de schoonheid van de natuur en in de grootsheid van de kosmos en ze brengen ons tot de ontdekking hoe alles van Hem en van zijn liefde spreekt. Dit alles wekt in ons een grote verbazing en een diep gevoel van dankbaarheid! Het is het gevoel dat we ook ervaren wanneer we tot bewondering komen voor een kunstwerk of voor een wonderbaarlijke vrucht van het genie en van de creativiteit van de mens. Ten overstaan van dit alles brengt de Geest ons ertoe de Heer uit het diepst van ons hart te loven en in alles wat we hebben en zijn, een onschatbare gave van God en een teken van zijn oneindige liefde voor ons te erkennen.

2. In het eerste hoofdstuk van het boek Genesis, dus werkelijk aan het begin van heel de Bijbel, wordt benadrukt dat God behagen heeft in zijn schepping door herhaaldelijk de schoonheid en de goedheid van elk schepsel te onderlijnen. Aan het eind van elke scheppingsdag staat geschreven: "God zag dat het goed was" (Gen. 1, 12.18.21.25). Als God ziet dat elk schepsel goed en schoon is, dan moeten ook wij diezelfde houding aannemen en zien dat elk schepsel goed en schoon is. Het is de gave van kennis die ons deze schoonheid doet zien, daarom ook loven we God en danken Hem omdat Hij ons zoveel schoonheid geschonken heeft. En wanneer God de schepping van de mens voltooide wordt niet gezegd: "Hij zag dat het goed was", maar Hij zei dat het "zeer goed" was (Gen. 1, 31). In de ogen van God zijn wij het mooiste, het grootste en het beste van heel de schepping. Zelfs de engelen komen na ons, wij zijn meer dan de engelen, zoals we horen in het Boek der Psalmen. De Heer houdt van ons! We moeten Hem daarvoor danken. De gave van kennis brengt ons tot diepe overeenstemming met de Schepper en helpt ons deelhebben aan de helderheid van zijn blik en van zijn oordeel. Het is vanuit dit gezichtspunt dat we kunnen vatten dat man en vrouw het toppunt van de schepping zijn, als de voltooiing van een plan van liefde dat in elk van ons geprent is en dat ons elkaar als broers en zussen doet erkennen.

3. Dit alles is motief voor rust en vrede en maakt van de Christen een blij getuigen van God, in het spoor van Sint Franciscus van Assisi en van vele heiligen die, door de contemplatie van de schepping ertoe kwamen God te loven en zijn liefde te bezingen. Tegelijk helpt de gave van kennis ons ook niet te vervallen in een aantal overdrijvingen of verkeerde houdingen. De eerst bestaat in het gevaar dat we ons als eigenaars van de schepping gaan gedragen. De schepping is geen eigendom waarover van we believe de baas kunnen spelen; en zeker is ze geen eigendom van slechts enkelen, van weinigen. De schepping is een schitterend geschenk dat God ons gegeven heeft om er zorg voor te dragen en te gebruiken ten bate van allen, met niet aflatende



eerbied en dankbaarheid. De tweede verkeerde houding bestaat in de bekoring om bij de schepselen te blijven stilstaan, alsof zij op al onze verwachtingen het antwoord kunnen zijn. Met de gave van kennis helpt de Geest ons deze vergissing niet te begaan.

Maar ik wil terugkomen op de eerste verkeerde weg: de baas spelen over de schepping in plaats van haar te behoeden. We moeten de schepping behoeden omdat ze een geschenk van God is, het geschenk van God aan ons; wij zijn de behoeders van de schepping. Als we de schepping uitbuiten, vernietigen we het teken van de liefde van God. De schepping vernietigen is aan God zeggen "ik houd er niet van". En dat is niet goed: dat is de zonde.

De schepping behoeden, is eigenlijk de gave van God behoeden en aan God zeggen: "Dank, ik ben hoeder van de schepping om haar vooruit te doen gaan, nooit om Uw geschenk te vernietigen". Dit moet onze houding tegenover de schepping zijn: haar behoeden want, als wij de schepping vernietigen, zal de schepping ons vernietigen. Vergeet dit niet. Eens was ik op het platteland en hoorde ik de uitspraak van een eenvoudige mens die van bloemen hield en er voor zorgde. Hij zei me: "We moeten deze mooie dingen die God ons geschonken heeft behoeden. De schepping is er voor ons opdat we er goed gebruik van zouden maken, niet om haar uit te buiten maar om haar te behoeden, want God vergeeft altijd, wij mensen vergeven af en toe, maar de schepping vergeeft nooit en als jij haar niet behoedt zal zij je vernietigen".

Dit moet ons tot nadenken stemmen en ons aan de Heilige Geest de gave van kennis doen vragen om goed te verstaan dat de schepping het mooiste geschenk van God is. Hij heeft zoveel goede dingen gemaakt voor het beste dat er is en dat is de menselijke persoon.

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

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Herken Christus in de lijdenden

Address to participants in the plenary session of the Pontifical Council for Health Care Workers (for Health Pastoral Care)

24 March 2014

Pope Francis



Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I welcome you on the occasion of your Plenary Session and I thank Archbishop Zimowski for his words. The Bishop of Rome is grateful to each of you for your commitment to the many brothers and sisters who bear the burden of sickness, disability, and difficult old age.

Your work in these days is inspired by what John Paul II said of suffering, 30 years ago, in the Apostolic Letter *Salvifici Doloris*: "to do good by one's suffering and to do good to those who suffer" (n. 30). John Paul II lived and witnessed to these words in an exemplary way. His was a living magisterium, which the People of God



reciprocated with so much affection and veneration, recognizing that God was with him.

It is true, in fact, that also in suffering no one is ever alone because God — in his merciful love for man and for the world — embraces even the most inhumane situations, in which the image of the Creator, present in everyone, is blurred or disfigured. Thus it was for Jesus in his Passion. In Him every human pain, every anxiety, every suffering was taken on out of love, out of pure desire to be close to us, to be with us. And here, in Jesus' Passion, is the greatest lesson for anyone who wants to dedicate him-herself to serving our sick and suffering brothers.

The experience of fraternal sharing with those who suffer opens us to the true beauty of human life which includes its frailty. In protecting and promoting life, at any stage or condition, we can recognize the dignity and value of every single human being, from conception until death.

Tomorrow we will celebrated the Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord. "The one who accepted 'Life' in the name of all and for the sake of all was Mary, the Virgin Mother; she is thus most closely and personally associated with the Gospel of life" (John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Evangelium Vitae*, n. 102). Mary offered up her own existence, she made her whole self available to the will of God, becoming a "place" of his presence, a "place" in which the Son of God dwells.

Dear friends, in exercising your daily service, let us keep ever present the flesh of Christ present in the poor, in those suffering, in children, also in the unwanted, in those with physical or mental disabilities and in the elderly.

Thus I invoke upon each of you, upon all those who are sick and suffering together with their families, as well as upon all those who take care of them, the maternal protection of Mary, *Salus infirmorum*, so that she may illumine your reflection and your action in defending and promoting life and in health pastoral care. May the Lord bless you.

Zorg voor ouderen, gehandicapten en ernstig zieken

Message of Pope Francis to Participants in the General Assembly of the Pontifical Academy For Life on the occasion of the 20th Anniversary of its Founding



20 February 2014

Pope Francis

To my Venerable Brother Bishop Carrasco de Paula, President of the Pontifical Academy for Life

I extend my cordial greetings to you, to Your Eminences, and to all the participants in the General Assembly of the Pontifical Academy for Life on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of its founding. On this occasion our grateful thoughts turn to Blessed John Paul II, who established this Academy, as well as to all of the Presidents who have promoted its activity and all those who, throughout the world, collaborate in its mission. The specific task of the Academy, as expressed in the *Motu Proprio Vitae Mysterium*, is "to study and to provide information and training about the principle problems of law and biomedicine pertaining to the promotion and protection of



life, especially in the direct relationship they have with Christian morality and the directives of the Church's Magisterium" (L'Osservatore Romano, English edition, 9 March 1994, n. 4). In this way, you strive to make known to people of goodwill that science and technology, when placed at the service of the human person and his or her fundamental rights, contribute to the integral good of the person.

The work that you are carrying out over the course of these days has the theme: "Aging and Disability". It is an extremely relevant topic, which is close to the Church's heart. In fact, in our societies we find the tyrannical dominion of an economic logic that excludes and sometimes kills, and of which so many today are victims, beginning with our elderly. "We have created a 'throw away' culture which is now spreading. It is no longer simply about exploitation and oppression, but something new. Exclusion ultimately has to do with what it means to be a part of the society in which we live; those excluded are no longer society's underside or its fringes or its disenfranchised — they are no longer even a part of it. The excluded are not the 'exploited' but the outcast, the 'leftovers'" (Evangelii Gaudium, n. 53). The socio-demographic situation of the aged clearly reveals to us this exclusion of the elderly, especially when he or she is ill, disabled or vulnerable for any reason. One too often forgets, in fact, that human relationships are always relationships of mutual dependence, which is manifest to different degrees over the course of a person's life and which becomes most apparent in old age, illness, disability and suffering in general. And this requires that, in interpersonal relationships such as those which exist in a community, we offer the necessary help, in order to seek to respond to the need the person presents at that moment. However, at the basis of discrimination and exclusion there lies an anthropological question: what is man's worth and what is the basis of his worth? Health is certainly an important value, but it does not determine the value of a person. Furthermore, health in and of itself is no guarantee of happiness: for this may occur even in the presence of poor health. The fullness towards which every human life tends is not in contradiction with a condition of illness and suffering. Therefore, poor health and disability are never a good reason for excluding or, worse, for eliminating a person; and the most serious privation that elderly persons undergo is not the weakening of the body and the disability that may ensue, but abandonment and exclusion, the privation of love.

The family, instead, is the teacher of acceptance and solidarity: it is within the family that education substantially draws upon relationships of solidarity; in the family one learns that the loss of health is not a reason for discriminating against human life; the family teaches us not to fall into individualism and to balance the 'I' with the 'we'.

It is there that "taking care of one another" becomes a foundation of human life and a moral attitude to foster, through the values of commitment and solidarity. The witness of the family is crucial, before the whole of society, in reaffirming the importance of an elderly person as a member of a community, who has his or her own mission to accomplish and who only seemingly receives with nothing to offer. "Whenever we attempt to read the signs of the times it is helpful to listen to young people and the elderly. Both represent a source of hope for every people. The elderly bring with them memory and the wisdom of experience, which warns us not to foolishly repeat our past mistakes" (ibid., n. 108).

A society truly welcomes life when it recognizes that it is also precious in old age, in disability, in serious illness and even when it is fading; when it teaches that the call to human fulfillment does not exclude suffering; indeed, when it teaches its members to see in the sick and suffering a gift for the entire community, a presence that summons them to solidarity and responsibility. This is the Gospel of life which, through your scientific and professional competence, and sustained by grace, you are called to spread.

Dear friends, I bless the work of the Academy for Life, which is often demanding since it requires that you go against the tide, but which is always extremely valuable since it seeks to join scientific rigour and respect for the human person. I have been able to observe this by becoming more familiar with your work and publications;



and I hope that you preserve this same spirit in your ongoing service to the Church and to the whole human family. May the Lord bless you and may Our Lady protect you always.

From the Vatican, 19 February 2014

Faith and Charity: “We Ought to Lay Down Our Lives for One Another”

Message of Pope Francis for the 22nd World Day of the Sick 2014

6 december 2013

Paus Franciscus



Dear Brothers and Sisters,

1. On the occasion of the Twenty-second World Day of the Sick, whose theme this year is Faith and Charity: “We Ought to Lay Down Our Lives for One Another” (1 Jn 3:16), I turn in a special way to the sick and all those who provide them with assistance and care. The Church recognizes in you, the sick, a special presence of the suffering Christ. It is true. At the side of – and indeed within – our suffering, is the suffering of Christ; he bears its burden with us and he reveals its meaning. When the Son of God mounted the cross, he destroyed the solitude of suffering and illuminated its darkness. We thus find ourselves before the mystery of God’s love for us, which gives us hope and courage: hope, because in the plan of God’s love even the night of pain yields to the light of Easter, and courage, which enables us to confront every hardship in his company, in union with him.

2. The incarnate Son of God did not remove illness and suffering from human experience but by taking them upon himself he transformed them and gave them new meaning. New meaning because they no longer have the last word which, instead, is new and abundant life; transformed them, because in union with Christ they need no longer be negative but positive. Jesus is the way, and with his Spirit we can follow him. Just as the Father gave us the Son out of love, and the Son gave himself to us out of the same love, so we too can love others as God has loved us, giving our lives for one another. Faith in God becomes goodness, faith in the crucified Christ becomes the strength to love to the end, even our enemies. The proof of authentic faith in Christ is self-giving and the spreading of love for our neighbours, especially for those who do not merit it, for the suffering and for the marginalized.

3. By virtue of Baptism and Confirmation we are called to conform ourselves to Christ, who is the Good Samaritan for all who suffer. “We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us – and we ought to lay down our lives for one another” (1 Jn 3:16). When we draw near with tender love to those in need of care, we bring hope and God’s smile to the contradictions of the world. When generous devotion to others becomes the hallmark of our actions, we give way to the Heart of Christ and bask in its warmth, and thus contribute to the coming of God’s Kingdom.

4. To grow in tender love, and a respectful and sensitive charity, we have a sure Christian model to



contemplate: Mary, the Mother of Jesus and our Mother, who is always attentive to the voice of God and the needs and troubles of her children. Mary, impelled by God's mercy which took flesh within her, selflessly hastened from Galilee to Judea to find and help her kinswoman Elizabeth. She interceded with her Son at the wedding feast of Cana when she saw that there was a shortage of wine. She bore in her heart, throughout the pilgrimage of her life, the words of the elderly Simeon who foretold that a sword would pierce her soul, and with persevering strength she stood at the foot of the cross of Jesus. She knows the way, and for this reason she is the Mother of all of the sick and suffering. To her we can turn with confidence and filial devotion, certain that she will help us, support us and not abandon us. She is the Mother of the crucified and risen Christ: she stands beside our crosses and she accompanies us on the journey towards the resurrection and the fullness of life.

5. Saint John, the disciple who stood with Mary beneath the cross, brings us to the sources of faith and charity, to the heart of the God who "is love" (1 Jn 4:8,16). He reminds us that we cannot love God if we do not love our brothers and sisters. Those who stand with Mary beneath the cross learn to love as Jesus does. The cross is "the certainty of the faithful love which God has for us. A love so great that it enters into our sin and forgives it, enters into our suffering and gives us the strength to bear it. It is a love which enters into death to conquer it and to save us... the cross of Christ invites us also to allow ourselves to be smitten by his love, teaching us always to look upon others with mercy and tenderness, especially those who suffer, who are in need of help" (Way of the Cross with Young People, Rio de Janeiro, 26 July 2013).

I entrust this Twenty-second World Day of the Sick to the intercession of Mary. I ask her to help the sick to bear their sufferings in fellowship with Jesus Christ and to support all those who care for them. To all the ill, and to all the health-care workers and volunteers who assist them, I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing.

Wees present in het publieke debat

Toespraak tot de Nederlandse bisschoppen bij hun Ad Liminabezoek aan de Apostelen



2 december 2013
Paus Franciscus

Beste broeders in het bisschopsambt,

Tijdens deze dagen van uw Ad Liminabezoek aan de Apostelen groet ik u allen van harte in de Heer en ik verzeker u van mijn gebed, opdat deze pelgrimage rijk mag zijn aan genade en vruchten voor de Kerk in Nederland. Beste kardinaal Willem Jacobus Eijk, dank voor de woorden die u in naam van allen tot mij gesproken heeft!

Laat mij u voor alles mijn erkentelijkheid tonen voor wat u doet voor de dienst van Christus en het Evangelie, welke u vervult voor het volk dat u is toevertrouwd in vaak harde omstandigheden. Het is niet gemakkelijk om hoopvol te blijven bij de moeilijkheden, waarmee u wordt geconfronteerd! De collegiale uitoefening van uw



bisschopsambt in eenheid met de bisschop van Rome, is noodzakelijk om de hoop op een ware dialoog en een effectieve samenwerking te laten groeien. Het zal u goed doen om met vertrouwen de tekenen van vitaliteit in ogenschouw te nemen, die in de christelijke gemeenschappen van uw bisdommen duidelijke aanwezig zijn. Het zijn tekenen van de actieve aanwezigheid van de Heer te midden van de mensen in uw land, die wachten op authentieke getuigen van hoop, die u laat leven van wat van Christus komt.

De Kerk blijft zich met een moederlijk geduld inspannen om antwoorden te geven op onrust van mensen, geconfronteerd met angst en ontmoediging, de toekomst tegemoet zien. Met uw priesters, uw directe medewerkers, wilt u nabij zijn aan mensen die lijden onder een spirituele leegte en die op zoek zijn naar de zin van hun leven, zelfs als zij dat niet altijd weten uit te drukken. We kunnen hen op die zoektocht alleen maar broederlijk vergezellen door betrokken naar hen te luisteren en hen voor te gaan in de hoop en de vreugde die Jezus Christus ons geeft.

Daarom probeert de Kerk het geloof op een authentieke, begrijpelijke en pastorale wijze voor te houden. Het "Jaar van het Geloof" is een gelukkige gelegenheid geweest om duidelijk te maken hoe zeer de inhoud van het geloof alle mensen kan bereiken. De christelijke antropologie en de sociale leer van de Kerk maken deel uit van het erfgoed, van de ervaring en van het humanisme die aan de basis liggen van de Europese beschaving. Zij kunnen helpen om concreet het primaat van de mens boven de techniek en de structuren te herbevestigen. Dit primaat van de mens veronderstelt een openheid voor transcendentie. Daarentegen, wanneer je de transcendente dimensie wegdrukt, verarmt een cultuur die de mogelijkheid moet laten zien in constante harmonie geloof en rede, waarheid en vrijheid steeds met elkaar te verbinden.

Aldus stelt de Kerk niet alleen onveranderlijke morele waarheden voor en houdingen die tegen de stroom van de wereld ingaan, maar zij stelt deze ook voor als de sleutel van menselijk geluk en van sociale ontwikkeling. Christenen hebben een eigen missie om deze uitdaging te laten zien.

De vorming van gewetens wordt een prioriteit, vooral door de vorming van een kritisch oordeel, alles met een positieve houding voor de sociale realiteit; zo vermijdt men de oppervlakkigheid van oordeel en het verval tot onverschilligheid. Vandaar dat van katholieken, priesters, religieuzen en leken een solide en kwalitatieve vorming vereist wordt. Ik moedig u aan om met vereende krachten te beantwoorden aan deze behoefte en ervoor te zorgen dat het evangelie optimaal wordt verkondigd. In deze context heeft het getuigenis en het engagement van leken in de Kerk en in de samenleving hun eigen plaats en zij moeten hierbij krachtig ondersteund worden. Als gedoopten zijn wij allen uitgenodigd om daar waar we staan missionaire leerlingen te zijn.

Onze samenleving wordt krachtig gemarkeerd door secularisatie. Ik moedig u aan ook present te zijn in het publieke debat, op alle domeinen waar mensen aanwezig zijn om de barmhartigheid van God en Zijn tederheid voor iedereen zichtbaar te maken. In de wereld van vandaag moet de Kerk zonder aarzelen de woorden van Jezus herhalen: "Kom allen tot mij, die vermoeid zijn en onder lasten gebukt, ik zal jullie rust geven." (Mt. 11, 28). Maar laten wij ons de vraag stellen: wie een christen ontmoet, begrijpt hij iets van de goedheid van God, van de vreugde Christus te hebben ontmoet? Zoals ik al vaker bevestigd heb, vertrekkend vanuit een authentieke ervaring van het bisschopsambt, groeit de Kerk niet door proselitisme maar door aantrekkingskracht. Zij is naar allen gezonden om de hoop te doen ontwaken! Daarom is het belangrijk om uw gelovigen te bemoedigen en om gelegenheden tot dialoog aan te grijpen en present te zijn bij instanties waar de toekomst bepaald wordt; zo zullen ze hun bijdrage leveren aan het debat over de grote vragen van de samenleving betreffende bijvoorbeeld het gezin, het huwelijk of het einde van het leven.

Meer dan ooit is er een noodzaak tot oecumene en een uitnodiging om te komen tot een ware dialoog die elementen van waarheid en van goedheid zoekt en die antwoorden geeft vanuit de inspiratie van het evangelie.



De Heilige Geest laat ons vanuit onszelf vertrekken op weg naar de anderen!

In een in veel opzichten rijk land raakt de armoede veel mensen. Waardeer de edelmoedigheid van de gelovigen om het licht en het meeleven van Christus te brengen in milieus die Hem verwachten, vooral de meest gemarginaliseerden!

Zo zal de katholieke school die aan jongeren een goede opvoeding geeft, voortgaan voorkeur te geven aan hun menselijke en spirituele vorming, in een geest van dialoog en broederlijkheid met hen die hun geloof niet delen. Het is dus belangrijk dat de jongeren een goede inhoudelijke catechese ontvangen, die het geloof ondersteunt en die leidt tot de ontmoeting met Christus. Solide vorming en een open geest! Zo zien we hoe de Blijde Boodschap zich blijft verspreiden.

U weet heel goed dat de toekomst en de vitaliteit van de kerk in Nederland ook afhangt van roepingen tot het priesterschap en het religieuze leven! Het is noodzakelijk een krachtige en aantrekkelijke roepingenpastoraal op te zetten en tegelijk gemeenschappelijk te zoeken naar begeleiding bij de menselijke en spirituele rijping van de seminaristen. Dat zij in hun leven een persoonlijke relatie opbouwen met de Heer, die het fundament van hun priesterleven zal zijn! Wij mogen ook de urgentie voelen om tot de Heer van de oogst te bidden! De herontdekking van het gebed in diverse vormen en speciaal de eucharistische aanbidding is een motief van hoop om de Kerk te laten groeien en wortelen. Het is heel belangrijk en essentieel om dicht bij uw priesters te zijn, beschikbaar voor ieder van uw priesters om hen te ondersteunen en te leiden als het nodig is. Neem als een vader de tijd om hen altijd te ontvangen en naar hen te luisteren, wanneer zij daar om vragen. En vergeet ook niet degenen te ontmoeten die zelf niet komen. Onder hen zijn er helaas ook van wie het eerste elan sterk verminderd is.

Heel speciaal wil ik mijn compassie tonen en u verzekeren van mijn gebed voor alle mensen die slachtoffer geworden zijn van seksueel misbruik en hun gezinnen. Ik vraag u door te gaan en hen te blijven ondersteunen op hun smartvolle weg van genezing, die zij met moed ondernemen. Attent op het verlangen van Christus, de Goede Herder, neem ter harte, bewaak en laat groeien de liefde en eenheid in alles en tussen allen.

Tot slot wil ik u nog bedanken voor de tekenen van vitaliteit waarmee de Heer de Kerk in Nederland zegent, in een context die niet altijd gemakkelijk is. Dat hij u bemoedigt en u bevestigt in uw delicate missie uw gemeenschappen te begeleiden op de weg van geloof en eenheid, van waarheid en liefde. U toevertrouwend, eveneens uw priesters, religieuzen en de leken in uw bisdommen, aan de bescherming van de Heilige Maagd Maria, Moeder van de Kerk, geef ik u van harte mijn apostolische zegen verbonden met de vrede en geestelijke vreugde. Broederlijk vraag ik u om mij niet te vergeten in uw gebed.

Bron: [Website RKKerk.nl](https://www.rkkerk.nl)

Aandacht voor ouderen met degeneratieve ziekten

Address to participants in the 28th International Conference sponsored by the Pontifical Council for Health Care Workers



Paul VI Audience Hall
23 November 2013
Pope Francis



Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Thank you for your welcome! I cordially greet you all.

Today I would like to repeat that the elderly have always been and still are protagonists in the Church. Today more than ever the Church must set an example for the whole of society that, despite their inevitable and sometimes grave “ailments”, the elderly are always important; indeed, they are indispensable. They carry the memory and wisdom of life to hand down to others, and they participate fully in the Church’s mission. Let us remember that, in God’s eyes, human life always retains its value far beyond any discriminating vision.

The increased life expectancy which developed over the course of the 20th century has entailed that a growing number of people are facing neurodegenerative diseases, which are often accompanied by a deterioration of the cognitive capacities. These diseases push the socio-health care world both to the horizons of research, and to those of assistance and care in social facilities, as well as in the family, which remains the privileged place of warmth and closeness.

The provision of adequate assistance and services which respect the dignity, identity and needs of patients is important, but the support of those who assist them, whether family members or healthcare professionals, is also important. This is only possible within the context of trust and within an atmosphere of a mutually respectful relationship. Lived in this way, care becomes quite an enriching experience, both professionally and humanly; otherwise, it becomes all too similar to cold, basic “physical protection”.

It therefore becomes necessary to be committed to a form of assistance that, alongside the traditional biomedical model, offers spaces of dignity and freedom, far, far away from closure and silence, that torture of silence! Silence is so often transformed into torture. People who live in assisted care are often surrounded by this sense of enclosure and silence. Within this perspective, I would like to stress the importance of the religious and spiritual aspect. Indeed, this is a dimension that remains vital even when cognitive faculties have been reduced or lost. It is a matter of implementing a special pastoral approach in order to accompany the religious life of elderly patients with serious degenerative diseases in various forms, to ensure that their minds and hearts do not interrupt their dialogue and relationship with God.

I would like to conclude by greeting the elderly. Dear friends, you are not only recipients of the good news of the Gospel message; in virtue of your Baptism you shall always be its heralds in the truest sense. Each day you can live as witnesses of the Lord, in your families, in your parishes and in your habitual meeting places, by making Christ and his Gospel known, especially to the younger generations. Remember that it was two elderly people who recognized Jesus in the Temple and proclaimed him with joy, with hope. I entrust all of you to the protection of Our Lady, and I thank you from my heart for your prayers. Now, all together let us pray to Our Lady for all healthcare workers, for the sick, for the elderly and then let us receive the blessing (Hail Mary...).



Ongeboren kind heeft Gods aangezicht

Address to Group of Catholic Gynecologists: “Spread the Gospel of Life. Every unborn child, condemned unjustly to being aborted, has the face of the Lord”

Zenit, 20 september 2013



20 september 2013

Pope Francis

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Please excuse the delay, there were complications today on account of the audiences ... forgive me please.

1. The first reflection that I would like to share with you is this: today we are witnessing a paradoxical situation, which concerns the medical profession. On the one hand, we note — and we thank God for it — the advances made in medicine, thanks to the work of scientists who passionately and unsparingly dedicate themselves to the search for new cures. On the other hand, however, we also find the danger of a doctor losing his own identity as a servant of life. Cultural disorientation has beset what seemed to be an unassailable sphere: yours, medicine!

Although, by their very nature, healthcare professions are at the service of life, they are sometimes induced to disregard life itself. Yet, as the Encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* reminds us: “Openness to life is at the centre of true development”. There is no true development without this openness to life. “If personal and social sensitivity towards the acceptance of a new life is lost, then other forms of acceptance that are valuable for society also wither away. The acceptance of life strengthens moral fibre and makes people capable of mutual help” (n. 28). This paradoxical situation may be seen in the fact that, while persons are being accorded new rights — at times even presumed rights — life itself is not always protected as a primary value and primordial right of every human being. The final aim of the doctor’s action is always the defence and promotion of life.

2. The second point: in this context of contradiction, the Church makes an appeal to consciences, to the consciences of all healthcare professionals and volunteers, and especially to you gynaecologists, who are called to assist in the birth of new human lives. Yours is a singular vocation and mission, which requires study, conscientiousness and humanity. There was a time when women who helped in the delivery were called “comadre” [co-mothers, midwives]: like one mother with another, with the real mother. You, too, are “co-mothers” and “co-fathers”, you too.

A widespread mentality of the useful, the “culture of waste” that today enslaves the hearts and minds of so many, comes at a very high cost: it asks for the elimination of human beings, especially if they are physically or socially weaker. Our response to this mentality is a decisive and unreserved “yes” to life. “The first right of the human person is his life. He has other goods and some are more precious, but this one is fundamental — the condition of all the others” (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Declaration on procured abortion, 18 November 1974, n. 11). Things have a price and can be sold, but people have a dignity; they are worth more than things and are above price. So often we find ourselves in situations where we see that what is valued the



least is life. That is why concern for human life in its totality has become in recent years a real priority for the Church's Magisterium, especially for the most defenseless; i.e., the disabled, the sick, the newborn, children, the elderly, those whose lives are most defenseless.

In a frail human being, each one of us is invited to recognize the face of the Lord, who in his human flesh experienced the indifference and solitude to which we so often condemn the poorest of the poor, whether in developing countries or in wealthy societies. Every child who, rather than being born, is condemned unjustly to being aborted, bears the face of Jesus Christ, bears the face of the Lord, who even before he was born, and then just after birth, experienced the world's rejection. And every elderly person – I spoke of children: let us move to the elderly, another point! And every elderly person, even if he is ill or at the end of his days, bears the face of Christ. They cannot be discarded, as the “culture of waste” suggests! They cannot be thrown away!

3. The third aspect is a mandate: be witnesses and diffusers of the “culture of life”. Your being Catholic entails a greater responsibility: first of all to yourselves, through a commitment consistent with your Christian vocation; and then to contemporary culture, by contributing to recognizing the transcendent dimension of human life, the imprint of God's creative work, from the first moment of its conception. This is a task of the new evangelization that often requires going against the tide and paying for it personally. The Lord is also counting on you to spread the “gospel of life”.

Within this perspective, hospital departments of gynecology are privileged places of witness and evangelization, for wherever the Church becomes “the bearer of the presence of God”, there, too, she becomes the “instrument of the true humanization of man and the world” (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Doctrinal Note on Some Aspects of Evangelization, n. 9).

By fostering an awareness that the human person in his frailty stands at the centre of all medical and healthcare work, the healthcare facility becomes “a place in which the relationship of treatment is not a profession” — your relationship of treatment is not a profession — “but a mission; where the charity of the Good Samaritan is the first seat of learning and the face of suffering man is the Christ's own Face” (Benedict XVI, Address at the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, 3 May 2012).

Dear friends and physicians, you are called to care for life in its initial stage; remind everyone, by word and deed, that this is sacred — at each phase and at every age — that it is always valuable. And not as a matter of faith — no, no — but of reason, as a matter of science! There is no human life more sacred than another, just as there is no human life qualitatively more significant than another. The credibility of a healthcare system is not measured solely by efficiency, but above all by the attention and love given to the person, whose life is always sacred and inviolable.

Never fail to ask the Lord and the Virgin Mary for the strength to accomplish your work well and to bear witness courageously — courageously! Today courage is needed — to bear witness courageously to the “gospel of life”! Thank you very much.