



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.