



“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 Blesseds 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