



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS
TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE CONFERENCE
OF THE ITALIAN SOCIETY OF SURGICAL ONCOLOGY
ON "DIGESTIVE SURGERY NEW TRENDS AND SPENDING REVIEW"**

*Clementine Hall
Saturday, 12 April 2014*

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I welcome all of you who are taking part in the Conference of the Italian Society of Surgical Oncology, organized by the Sapienza University of Rome and Sant'Andrea Hospital. In welcoming you, I call to mind all the men and women under your care, and I pray for them.

Scientific research has increased the possibilities for prevention and care; it has discovered therapies to treat a wide variety of diseases. You have also worked for this most worthy commitment: to respond to the needs and hopes of the sick throughout the world.

But in order to talk about total health, it is necessary not to lose sight of the fact that the human person, created in the image and likeness of God, is a unity of body and spirit. The Greeks were more precise: body, soul and spirit. The human person is unity. These two elements may be distinguished but not separated, because the person is one. Thus also illness, the experience of pain and suffering, involves not only the physical dimension, but man in his totality. That is why there is need for integral treatment, which considers the person as a whole and joins medical care — “technical” care — to human, psychological and social support, for the physician has to care for all aspects: the human body in its psychological, social and spiritual dimensions, as well as the spiritual accompaniment and support for the sick person’s family. It is, therefore, imperative that healthcare workers be those who are “led by an integrally human view of illness and who as a result are able to effect a fully human approach to the sick person who is suffering” (John Paul II, *Motu Proprio Dolentium hominum*, 11 February 1985).

Fraternal sharing with the sick opens us up to the true beauty of human life, which also includes its fragility, thus enabling us to recognize the dignity and value of every human being, in whatever situation they may find themselves, from conception to death.

Dear friends, tomorrow is the start of Holy Week, which culminates in the Triduum of the Passion, death and Resurrection of Jesus. Here, human suffering is completely taken on and redeemed by God. By God-Love. Only Christ gives meaning to the scandal of innocent suffering. Many times, the agonizing question of Dostoyevsky comes to the heart: why do children suffer? Only Christ can give meaning to this “scandal”. You can always look to Him, crucified and Risen, in carrying out your daily work. And at the foot of the Cross of Jesus, we also meet the Sorrowful Mother. She is the Mother of all humanity, and she is always close to her sick and ailing children. If our faith waivers, hers does not. May Mary always sustain you and your commitment to research and action in your work. And I pray, I ask the Lord to bless all of you. Thank you.