



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO THE MEMBERS OF THE ITALIAN ASSOCIATION OF LEATHER CHEMISTS**

*Clementine Hall
Saturday, 29 January 2022*

[Multimedia]

Dear friends good morning, and welcome!

I like to see the mothers there, cuddling the children. It's nice when they come with children. If they want to walk, let them do as they please; and if they are hungry, let them eat! They are the kings here.

I thank the President for his kind words, and for having briefly presented your work to me. I greet you present here and all the members of the Italian Association of Leather Chemists.

I am glad to receive you for several reasons. First and foremost, because you represent a very specific category of worker, who in the great "polyhedron" of global society offer an original and characteristic contribution. Your profession applies scientific and technical knowledge to a craft that has an ancient tradition, both in Italy and in other countries, including my own, Argentina. As a young man I studied in a technical institute for chemistry, which brings me a little closer to your profession.

At this time of very complex economic and social crisis, I also take this opportunity to express my closeness and that of the Church to the world of work. Many workers and many families are experiencing difficult situations, aggravated by the pandemic. But the pandemic cannot and must not become an alibi to justify omissions in justice or in safety. On the contrary, the crisis can be faced as an opportunity to grow together in solidarity and in the quality of work. May the example and intercession of Saint Joseph help you not to give in to discouragement, to make creative use

of your talents and your great experience to move forward and open up new paths. To this end, it is very important to bring together the wisdom of the elderly and the enthusiasm of the young. May they come together – this is the secret! I can imagine young people who are passionate about an original sector such as yours, and they need to find “old hands” who have much to teach, and not only on a technical level, but also on a human level. For me, the challenge of this time is the encounter between grandparents and grandchildren, bypassing the parents perhaps, but this is a key encounter, and we must work to ensure that the young encounter the elderly. It is a challenge of this time.

There is another aspect I would like to touch upon with you, because it is a critical point and I know that it is close to your heart – your president also mentioned it. It regards the environmental impact of activities that, like yours, use chemical substances to treat materials, in your case the hides that are destined to become shoes, bags, and so on – many things that we use every day, yet we do not think about the work that goes into them! You too, therefore, are required to give your specific contribution to caring for the common home; and you can do so precisely in the way in which you approach your own work. For this purpose, your association is very valuable, because you share your knowledge and experience, as well as legal and technical updates; and so you help each other to grow together in a style of social and ecological responsibility. This is very important! Today we have a greater awareness of ecological responsibility; we have grown in this, and it is a good thing; we have grown in this regard.

Dear friends, thank you for this visit. I wish you all the best in your work and in the activities of your association. And I ask you please not to forget to pray for me. Thank you!

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