



The Holy See

VISIT AT THE HOMELESS SHELTER "DONO DI MARIA":
MEETING WITH THE MISSIONARIES OF CHARITY

ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS

Tuesday, 21 May 2013

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good evening,

I address an affectionate greeting to you all; in an entirely special way to you, dear guests of this Home, which is especially yours, since it was intended and established for you. I thank all those who, in various ways, support this beautiful place in the Vatican. My presence this evening is meant above all to be a sincere ‘thank you’ to the Missionaries of Charity, founded by Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta, who have been working here for 25 years, with many volunteers, to care for so many people in need. Thank you from my heart! You, dear Sisters, together with the Missionaries of Charity [Fathers and Brothers] and their collaborators, make visible the Church’s love for the poor. With your daily service, you are — as a Psalm says — the hand of God that satisfies the hunger of every living thing (cf. Ps 145[144]:16). In these years, how many times have you bent over those in need, like the Good Samaritan, you looked them in the eye and you gave them your hand to raise them up! How many mouths have you fed with patience and dedication! How many wounds, especially spiritual, have you bandaged! Today I would like to pause on three words that are familiar to you: house, gift and Mary.

1. This building, desired and inaugurated by Blessed John Paul II – indeed this is something between saints, between blessed! John Paul II, Teresa of Calcutta; and holiness is passed on; and this is beautiful. It is a “home”. And when we say “home” we mean a place of hospitality, a dwelling, a pleasant human environment where one stays readily, finds oneself, feels inserted into a territory, in a community. Yet more profoundly, “home” is a word with a typically familiar flavour, which recalls warmth, affection, the love that can be felt in a family. Hence the “home” represents the most precious human treasures, that of encounter, that of relations among people, different in

age, culture and history, but who live together and together help one another to grow. For this reason, the “home” is a crucial place in life, where life grows and can be fulfilled, because it is a place in which every person learns to receive love and to give love. This is “home”. And this is what this Home has tried to be for 25 years! On the border between the Vatican and Italy, it is a strong appeal to us all, to the Church, to the City of Rome to be more and more of a family, a “home” open to hospitality, care and brotherhood.

2. There is then a second very important word: the word “gift”, which qualifies this Home and describes its typical identity. It is a Home, in fact, that is characterized by gift, by mutual gift. What do I mean? I wish to say that this Home gives hospitality, material and spiritual sustenance to you, dear guests, who have come from different parts of the world; but you are also a gift for this Home and for the Church. You tell us that to love God and neighbour is not something abstract, but profoundly concrete: it means seeing in every person the face of the Lord to be served, to serve him concretely. And you are, dear brothers and sisters, the face of Jesus. Thank you! You “give” the possibility to all those who work in this place to serve Jesus in those who are in difficulty, who are in need of help. This Home then is a luminous transparency of the charity of God, who is a good and merciful Father to all. Open hospitality is lived here, without distinctions of nationality or religion, according to the teaching of Jesus: “You received without pay, give without pay” (Mt 10:8). We must recover the whole sense of gift, of gratuitousness, of solidarity. Rampant capitalism has taught the logic of profit at all costs, of giving to get, of exploitation without looking at the person... and we see the results in the crisis we are experiencing! This Home is a place that teaches charity, a “school” of charity, which instructs me to go encounter every person, not for profit, but for love. The music — let us call it — of this Home is love. And this is beautiful! I am pleased that seminarians from the whole world come here to have a direct experience of service. The future priests can thus practice an essential aspect of the mission of the Church and set store by it for their pastoral ministry.

3. Finally there is one last characteristic of this Home: it qualifies itself as a gift “of Mary”. The Holy Virgin made of her existence an unceasing and beautiful gift to God, because she loved the Lord. Mary’s example is an incentive to those who live in this Home, and for all of us, to live in charity for our neighbour not out of some sort of social duty, but beginning from the love of God, from the charity of God. And also — as we heard from Mother — Mary is the one who leads us to Jesus and teaches us how to go to Jesus; and the Mother of Jesus is our own and makes a family, with us and with Jesus. For us Christians, love of neighbour springs from love of God; and it is its most limpid expression. Here one tries to love one’s neighbour, but also to allow oneself to be loved by one’s neighbour. These two attitudes go together, one cannot be exercised without the other. Printed on the letterhead of the Missionaries of Charity are these words of Jesus: “as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me” (Mt 25:40). Loving God in our brethren and loving our brethren in God.

Dear friends, thanks again to each one of you. I pray that this Home will continue to be a place of

hospitality, of gift, of charity, in the heart of our City of Rome. May the Virgin Mary always watch over you, and my Blessing accompany you. Thank you.

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