



The Holy See

PASTORAL VISIT TO ASSISI

MEETING WITH THE SICK AND DISABLED CHILDREN ASSISTED AT THE SERAPHIC INSTITUTE

ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS

Assisi

Friday, 4 October 2013

We are among the wounds of Jesus, as you have said, Madam. You also said that these wounds need to be heard, to be acknowledged. And this makes us think of that moment when the Lord Jesus was walking with the two sad disciples. The Lord Jesus, in the end, showed them his wounds and they recognized him. Then the bread, when he is there. My brother Domenico was saying to me that here you have Adoration. That bread too needs to be heard, because Jesus is present and hidden in the simplicity and meekness of bread. And here is Jesus hidden in these boys and girls, in these children, in these people. On the altar we adore the Flesh of Jesus; in the people we find the wounds of Jesus. Jesus hidden in the Eucharist and Jesus hidden in these wounds. They need to be heard! Maybe not so much in newspapers as news; there they take notice for one, two, three days, then something else comes up, and another thing.... The wounds should be heard by those who call themselves Christian. The Christian adores Jesus, the Christian seeks Jesus, the Christian knows how to recognize the wounds of Jesus. And today, all of us, here, need to say: "These wounds must be heard!". But there is something else that gives us hope. Jesus is present in the Eucharist, here is the Flesh of Jesus; Jesus is present among you, it is the Flesh of Jesus: the wounds of Jesus are present in these people.

However, it is interesting: when Jesus resurrected, he was very beautiful. He had neither bruises nor wounds on his body... nothing! He was even more beautiful! He wanted only to keep his wounds and to carry them with him to Heaven. Jesus' wounds are here and in Heaven before the Father. We heal the wounds of Jesus here and he, from Heaven, shows us his wounds and says

to us all, to all of us: "I am waiting for you!". Let it be so!

May the Lord bless you all. May his love descend on us, may he walk with us; May Jesus tell us that our wounds are his and may he help us give voice, that we Christians may listen to them.

The following are the words that Pope Francis had prepared for this occasion and that he gave to be published:

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I would like to begin my visit to Assisi with you, I greet all of you! Today is the Feast of St Francis, and as Bishop of Rome, I chose to bear his name. That is why I am here today: my visit is above all a pilgrimage of love, to pray at the tomb of a man who stripped himself of himself and clothed himself in Christ and, following the example of Christ, loved all people, especially the poorest and the abandoned, he loved God's creation with wonder and simplicity. Arriving here in Assisi, at the gates of the city, one finds this Institute, which calls itself "Seraphic", St Francis' nickname. It was founded by a great Franciscan, Blessed Ludovico da Casoria.

And it is right to begin here. St Francis says in his Testament: "The Lord granted me, Brother Francis, to begin to do penance in this way: While I was in sin, it seemed very bitter to me to see lepers. And the Lord Himself led me among them and I had mercy upon them. And when I left them that which seemed bitter to me was changed into sweetness of soul and body" (FF, 110).

Unfortunately, society has been polluted by the culture of "waste", which is opposed to the culture of acceptance. And the victims of this culture of waste are precisely persons who are the weakest, the most fragile. In this home, however, I see a culture of acceptance in action. Of course, not everything can be perfect here either, but you are working together for a dignified life for those people in grave difficulty. Thank you for this sign of love that you offer us: this is a sign of true citizenship, human and Christian! Put the most disadvantaged people at the centre of social and political attention! At times instead families find themselves alone in taking care of them. What should we do? In this place real love can be seen, I say to everyone: let us multiply our work in the culture of acceptance, works primarily enlivened by a deep Christian love, love for the Crucified Christ, for the flesh of Christ, works which join together professionalism, skilled work properly compensated with volunteer work, a precious treasure.

Serving with love and tenderness those who are in great need helps us to grow in humanity because they are true resources of humanity. St Francis was a rich young man, he had ideals of glory but Jesus, in the person of a leper, spoke to him in silence and he changed him, he made him understand what truly mattered in life: not wealth, nor power of weapons, nor earthly glory, but humility, mercy and forgiveness.

Here, dear brothers and sisters, I want to read you something personal, one of the most beautiful letters I have received, a gift of love from Jesus. Nicolás, a 16-year-old boy, disabled at birth who lives in Buenos Aires, wrote me. I will read it to you: "Dear Francis, my name is Nicolás and I am 16-years-old; since I cannot write you (because I can neither write nor walk), I asked my parents to do it for me, because they are the people who know me best. I want to tell you that when I was 6-years-old in my school named Aedin, Fr Pablo gave me First Communion and this year in November I will receive Confirmation, something that gives me great joy. Every night, since you asked me, I ask my Guardian Angel named Eusebio and who has a lot of patience to guard you and help you. You can be sure that he does it very well because he takes care of me and stays with me every day!! Ah! And when I am not tired... he comes to play with me!! I would very much like to come and see you and to receive your blessing and a kiss: only this!! I send you many greetings and continue to ask Eusebio to take care of you and to give you strength. Kisses. NICO".

In this letter, in the heart of this boy, there is beauty, love and the poetry of God. God who reveals himself to those who have a simple heart, to the smallest, to the humble and to those who we often consider to be last, even you dear friends. That boy when he cannot fall asleep plays with his Guardian Angel; it is God who comes down to play with him.

The bishop asked that in the chapel of this institute there be permanent Eucharistic Adoration: Jesus himself who we adore in the sacrament and who we meet in the most fragile of brothers, from whom we learn that God loves us with simplicity of heart without barriers or complications.

I thank everyone at this meeting. I carry you affectionately with me and in prayer. Please pray for me too! May the Lord bless you and may Our Lady and St Francis protect you.

After the Holy Father left the chapel, he went to the window and said the following words to the people outside of the building:

Good morning! I greet you all. I thank you very much for all of this. A prayer for all the babies, children and people who are here and for all those who work here! For them! How beautiful it is! May the Lord bless you all! Pray for me too! And always! Pray in favour of something and not against it! May the Lord bless you!