



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS TO THE ITALIAN PRO-LIFE MOVEMENT

*Clementine Hall
Friday, 11 April 2014*

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

When I entered I thought I had mistaken the door, that I had entered a kindergarten... Please excuse me!

I cordially welcome each one of you. I greet Hon. Mr Carlo Casini and I thank him for his words, but I especially wish to express my gratitude for all the work he has done over many years in the Movement for Life. I hope that when the Lord calls him, it will be children to open the door above! I greet the Presidents of Pro-life Help Centres and those in charge of the various services, especially “Project Gemma”, which in these 20 years has permitted, through a special form of concrete solidarity, the birth of many children who otherwise would not have seen the light of day. Thank you for the testimony you give by promoting and defending human life from the moment of conception! We know that human life is sacred and inviolable. Every civil right rests on the recognition of the first and fundamental right, that of life, which is not subordinate to any condition, be it quantitative, economic or, least of all, ideological. “Just as the commandment ‘Thou shalt not kill’ sets a clear limit in order to safeguard the value of human life, today we also have to say ‘thou shalt not’ to an economy of exclusion and inequality. Such an economy kills.... Human beings are themselves considered consumer goods to be used and then discarded. We have created a ‘throw away’ culture which is now spreading” (Apostolic Exhortation [*Evangelii Gaudium*](#), n. 53). And in this way life, too, ends up being thrown away.

One of the gravest risks our epoch faces, amid the opportunities offered by a market equipped with every technological innovation, is the divorce between economics and morality, the basic ethical norms of human nature are increasingly neglected. It is therefore necessary to express the

strongest possible opposition to every direct attack on life, especially against the innocent and defenseless, and the unborn in a mother's womb is the example of innocence *par excellence*. Let us remember the words of the Second Vatican Council: "Life must be protected with the utmost care from the moment of conception: abortion and infanticide are abominable crimes" (Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 51). I remember once, a long time ago, I had a conference with medical doctors. After the conference I greeted the doctors — this happened a long, long time ago. I was greeting the doctors, speaking to them, and one called me aside. He was holding a parcel and said to me: "Father, I want to leave this with you. These are the instruments that I used to perform abortions. I have met the Lord, I have repented and now I fight for life". He handed me all these instruments. Pray for this good man!

Anyone who is Christian has a duty to bear witness to the Gospel: to protect life courageously and lovingly in all its phases. I encourage you to do this always with closeness, proximity: so that every woman may feel respected as a person, heard, accepted and supported.

We spoke of children: there are so many! But I would also like to speak about their grandparents, the other side of life! Because we must also take care of our grandparents, for both babies and grandparents are the hope of a people: children and young people because they will carry it forward, they will carry the people forward; and grandparents, because they have the wisdom of history, they are the memory of a people. To protect life in an age when babies and grandparents enter this "throw-away" culture and become thought of as disposable material. No! Children and grandparents are the hope of a people!

Dear brothers and sisters, may the Lord sustain the work you carry out as Pro-life Help Centres and as the Movement for Life, especially the project "One of us". I entrust you to the heavenly intercession of the Virgin Mother Mary and from my heart I bless you and your families, your children, your grandparents, and pray for me because I need it!

When one speaks about life one immediately thinks of one's mother. Let us turn to our Mother that she may watch over us all. *Hail Mary...*

After the blessing, the Pope said before leaving:

One last thing. The sound of children crying, complaining, screaming is the most beautiful music to me. But some of these babies are crying because they are hungry. Please feed them here in peace!