



The Holy See

MESSAGE OF POPE FRANCIS TO CHARITY WORKERS IN SYRIA

Friday, 30 May 2014

*Your Eminence,
Your Excellencies,
Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

I thank you for your presence at this meeting sponsored by the Pontifical Council *Cor Unum*. I thank you especially for the daily contribution that you, as Catholic charitable organizations, offer in Syria and her neighbouring countries, to help those stricken by that terrible conflict. I greet Cardinal Robert Sarah and I address a warm welcome to all of you, especially those who travelled from the Middle East to be here today — I too still see before my eyes and carry in my heart the Middle East, after my pilgrimage to the Holy Land in recent days.

One year ago we were gathered to renew the Church's commitment to this crisis and together to launch an appeal for peace in Syria. Now we meet again to assess the work that has been done and to renew our will to proceed on this path, with an even more rigorous collaboration. But we must look back with great sorrow that the Syrian crisis has not been resolved, but only worsened, and there is risk of getting used to it: of forgetting the daily victims, the unspeakable suffering, the thousands of refugees, among them the elderly and children, who are suffering and at times dying of hunger and disease caused by the war. This indifference is harmful! Yet again we must repeat the name of the disease that plagues us so much in the world today: the globalization of indifference.

The work for peace and humanitarian aid that Catholic charities carry out in that context are faithful expressions of God's love for his children under oppression and in anguish. God hears their cries, he knows their sufferings and wants to free them; and to Him you lend your hands and

your abilities. It's important that you work in communion with the Shepherds and local communities; And this meeting constitutes a propitious occasion to identify appropriate forms of stable collaboration, in dialogue on the various subjects, with the goal of organizing ever more effectively your efforts to support the local Churches and all the victims of war, without ethnic, religious or social distinctions.

Today we are also here to make another appeal to the consciences of those leading the conflict, of global institutions and of public opinion. We are all aware that the future of humanity is built with peace and not war: war destroys, kills, impoverishes peoples and countries. I ask that all parties involved, looking to the common good, immediately permit humanitarian aid and as soon as possible silence the weapons and engage in negotiation, placing first the good of Syria, all of her inhabitants, and those who unfortunately have had to flee elsewhere and who have the right to return promptly to their homeland. I am thinking in particular of the beloved Christian communities, which are the face of a suffering and hopeful Church. Their survival throughout the Middle East is a grave concern for the Universal Church: Christianity must be able to continue to live in the land of her origins.

Dear brothers and sisters, your charitable and humanitarian work is an important sign of the closeness of the whole Church, and of the Holy See in particular, to the Syrian people as well as to other peoples in the Middle East. I renew my gratitude for what you do and I invoke the Lord's blessing on you and on your work. May Our Lady protect you. I am praying for you and you pray for me!