



The Holy See

MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS FOR THE LENTEN BROTHERHOOD CAMPAIGN 2016 OF THE CHURCH IN BRAZIL

Dear Brothers and Sisters of Brazil!

In his great mercy, God never tires of offering us his blessing and his grace, and of inviting us to convert and grow in the faith. In Brazil, since 1963, the Brotherhood Campaign has taken place during Lent. Each year it sets a theme to encourage the community to convert and change its lifestyle. This year, the 2016 Brotherhood Campaign concerns basic sanitary services. Its theme is: “Common home, our responsibility”. Its biblical motto is taken from the Prophet Amos: “Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream” (cf. Am 5:24).

It is the fourth time that the Brotherhood Campaign is being held in conjunction with Churches that are members of the National Council of Christian Churches of Brazil (CONIC). This time it crosses borders: it has combined with *Misereor*, an initiative of German Catholics that has held the Lenten Campaign since 1958. This year’s primary goal is to help ensure everyone of the fundamental right to basic sanitary services. It therefore appeals to all people, inviting them to participate in public policies and assume responsible attitudes that guarantee the integrity and the future of our “Common Home”.

We are all responsible for our Common Home, and this includes the leaders and society as a whole. Through this Brotherhood Campaign, people and communities are invited to mobilize, starting with the places where they live. They are called to participate in the initiatives in which Churches and various religious expressions and all people of good will join to promote justice and the right to basic sanitary services. Access to potable water and linkage to the sewer system are necessary in order to overcome social injustice and to eradicate poverty and hunger, reduce the high infant mortality rates and preventable diseases, and for environmental sustainability.

In the Encyclical *Laudato Si'* I recalled that “access to safe drinking water is a basic and universal human right, since it is essential to human survival and, as such, is a condition for the exercise of

other human rights” (n. 30) and that the heavy social debt to the poor is paid partly when programmes are implemented to provide clean water and sanitation to the poorest populations (cf. *ibid.*). From the standpoint of integral ecology, I sought to highlight the nexus between environmental degradation and human and social degradation, by cautioning that “the deterioration of the environment and of society particularly affects the most vulnerable people on the planet” (n. 48).

Let us deepen this ecological culture. This must not be limited to partial responses, as if the problems were isolated. “There needs to be a distinctive way of looking at things, a way of thinking, policies, an educational programme, a lifestyle and a spirituality which together generate resistance to the assault of the technocratic paradigm” (*Laudato Si'*, n. 111).

Dear brothers and sisters, I continue to say that the rich heritage of Christian spirituality can make an extraordinary contribution to the effort to renew humanity. I invite you, above all during this Lenten Season, promoted by the Ecumenical Brotherhood Campaign, to rediscover how our spirituality is deepened when we overcome the temptation “to be that kind of Christian who keeps the Lord’s wounds at arm’s length” and we discover that Jesus wants us to “touch the suffering flesh of others” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 270), dedicating ourselves with “generous care, full of tenderness” (cf. *Laudato Si'*, n. 220) to our brothers and sisters and the whole of creation.

I join with all Christians in Brazil and with those in Germany who are engaged in this Ecumenical Brotherhood Campaign, asking that God may: “Teach us to discover the worth of each thing, to be filled with awe and contemplation, to recognize that we are profoundly united with every creature as we journey towards your infinite light. We thank you for being with us each day. Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle for justice, love and peace” (*Laudato Si'*, n. 246). I take this opportunity to convey my cordial greetings to you all, wishing you every good in Jesus Christ, the One Saviour of mankind and asking you, please, to keep praying for me!

Vatican, 22 January 2016

Franciscus pp.