



The Holy See

PASTORAL VISIT TO CAGLIARI

MEETING WITH WORKERS

ADDRESS OF HOLY FATHER FRANCIS

Largo Carlo Felice, Cagliari
Sunday, 22 September 2013

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

I greet you all cordially: workers, business people, authorities, the families present and, in particular, Archbishop Arrigo Miglio, and the three of you who have told us about your problems, about your expectations and also about your inspirations. With this visit — as I said — I am starting with you, who make up the world of work. With this meeting I want above all to express my closeness to you, especially to the situations of suffering: to the many young people out of work, to people on unemployment benefits, or on a temporary basis, to business and tradespeople who find it hard to keep going. I am very familiar with this situation because of my experience in Argentina. I myself was spared it but my family wasn't. My father went to Argentina as a young man full of illusions "of making it in America". And he suffered in the dreadful recession of the 1930s. They lost everything! There was no work! And in my childhood I heard talk of this period at home.... I never saw it, I had not yet been born, but I heard about this suffering at home, I heard talk of it. I know it well! However, I must say to you: "Courage!". Nevertheless I am also aware that for own my part I must do everything to ensure that this term "courage" is not a beautiful word spoken in passing! May it not be merely the smile of a courteous employee, a Church employee who comes and says "be brave!" No! I don't want this! I want courage to come from within me and to impel me to do everything as a pastor, as a man. We must all face this challenge with solidarity, among you — also among us — we must all face with solidarity and intelligence this historic

struggle.

This is the second city in Italy that I have visited. It is curious: both of them, the first one and this one, are on islands. In the first I saw the suffering of so many people on a quest, risking their life, their dignity, their livelihood, their health: the world of refugees. And I saw the response of that city which — as an island — did not want to isolate itself and receives them, makes them its own. It gives us an example of hospitality: suffering meets with a positive response. In this second city, an island that I am visiting, I here too find suffering. Suffering which, as one of you has said, “weakens you and ends by robbing you of hope”. It is a form of suffering, the shortage of work — that leads you — excuse me if I am coming over a little strong but I am telling the truth — to feel that you are deprived of dignity! Where there is no work there is no dignity! And this is not only a problem in Sardinia — but it is serious here! — it is not only a problem in Italy or in certain European countries, it is the result of a global decision, of an economic system which leads to this tragedy; an economic system centred on an idol called “money”.

God did not want an idol to be at the centre of the world but man, men and women who would keep the world going with their work. Yet now, in this system devoid of ethics, at the centre there is an idol and the world has become an idolater of this “god-money”.

Money is in command! Money lays down the law! It orders all these things that are useful to it, this idol. And what happens? To defend this idol all crowd to the centre and those on the margins are done down, the elderly fall away, because there is no room for them in this world! Some call this habit “hidden euthanasia”, not caring for them, not taking them into account.... “No, let’s not bother about them...”. And the young who do not find a job collapse, and their dignity with them. Do you realize that in a world where youth — two generations of young people — have no work that this world has no future Why? Because they have no dignity! It is hard to have dignity without work. This is your difficulty here. This is the prayer you were crying out from this place: “work”, “work”, “work”. It is a necessary prayer. Work means dignity, work means taking food home, work means loving! To defend this idolatrous economic system the “culture of waste” has become established; grandparents are thrown away and young people are thrown away. And we must say “no” to this “culture of waste”. We must say “we want a just system! A system that enables everyone to get on”. We must say: “we don’t want this globalized economic system which does us so much harm!”. Men and women must be at the centre as God desires, and not money!

I have written a few things down for you, but on seeing you these words came to me. I shall give the bishop this written text as if they had been spoken; but I preferred to tell you what welled up from my heart, as I look at you now! You know, it is easy to say don’t lose hope. But to all, to you all, those who have work and those who don’t, I say “do not let yourself be robbed of hope! Do not let yourselves be robbed of hope!”. Perhaps hope is like embers under the ashes; let us help each other with solidarity, blowing on the ashes to rekindle the flame. But hope carries us onwards. That is not optimism, it is something else. However hope does not belong to any one

person, we all create hope! We must sustain hope in everyone, among all of you and among all of us who are far away. Hope is both yours and ours. It is something that belongs to everyone! This is why I am saying to you: “do not let yourselves be robbed of hope!”. But let us be cunning, for the Lord tells us that idols are more clever than we are. The Lord asks us to have the wisdom of serpents and the innocence of doves. Let us acquire this cunning and call things by their proper name. At this time, in our economic system, in our proposed globalized system of life there is an idol at the centre and this is unacceptable! Let us all fight so that there may be men and women, families, all of us at the centre — at least of our own life — so that hope can make headway.... “Do not let yourselves be robbed of hope!”.

I would now like to finish by praying with you all in silence, in silence, praying with all of you. I shall say to you whatever wells up in my heart and please pray with me in silence.

“Lord God look down upon us! Look at this city, this island. Look upon our families.

Lord, you were not without a job, you were a carpenter, you were happy.

Lord, we have no work.

The idols want to rob us of our dignity. The unjust systems want to rob us of hope.

Lord, do not leave us on our own. Help us to help each other; so that we forget our selfishness a little and feel in our heart the “we”, the we of a people who want to keep on going.

Lord Jesus, you were never out of work, give us work and teach us to fight for work and bless us all. In the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”.

Thank you very much and pray for me!

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[The following are the words Pope Francis had prepared for the occasion and gave to the Archbishop of Cagliari for publication.]

I should like to share with you three simple but crucial points.

The first: *put the person and work back at the centre*. The economic crisis has a European and a global dimension; however the crisis is not only economic, it is also ethical, spiritual and human. At its root is a betrayal of the common good, both on the part of individuals and of power groups. It is therefore necessary to remove centrality from the law of profit and gain, and to put the person and the common good back at the centre. One very important factor for the dignity of the person is, precisely, work; work must be guaranteed if there is to be an authentic promotion of the person. This task is incumbent on the society as a whole. For this reason we should acknowledge the great merit of those business people who have never stopped working hard in spite of all, investing and taking risks in order to guarantee employment. The culture of work together with that of social assistance, entails an education in work from a young age, guidance in work, dignity for

any work activity, sharing work, and the elimination of all illegal work. In this phase the whole of society, every one of its members, should make every possible effort to ensure that work, which is the source of dignity, be the main concern! Moreover your condition in living on an island makes this common engagement even more important on everyone's part, and especially for the political and economic institutions.

The second element. The Gospel of hope. Sardinia is a land blessed by God with a range of human and environmental resources. However, as in the rest of Italy, it needs a new impetus for a fresh start. And Christians can and must do their part, making their specific contribution: the Gospel vision of life. I recall Pope Benedict XVI's words on his [visit to Cagliari in 2008](#): we must be capable of "evangelizing the world of work, the economy and politics which need a new generation of committed lay Christians who can seek competently and with moral rigour sustainable solutions of development" (*Homily*, 7 September 2008) at the Shrine of Our Lady of Bonaria. The Bishops of Sardinia are particularly sensitive to these situations, especially to that of work. Dear bishops you point to the need for a serious and realistic discernment, but which is also directed to a journey of hope, as you wrote in your message for this visit. This is important, it is the right response! Look reality in the face, know it well, understand it and seek roads to take together, using the method of collaboration and dialogue, living closeness in order to bring hope. Never cloud hope! Do not confuse it with optimism — which merely implies a psychological attitude — or with other things. Hope is creative, it can create a future.

Thirdly: dignified work for all. A society open to hope is not closed in on itself, in the defence of the interests of the few. Rather it looks ahead from the viewpoint of the common good. And this requires on the part of all a strong sense of responsibility. There is no social hope without dignified employment for all. For this reason we must "continue to prioritise the goal of access to steady employment for everyone" or its maintenance for everyone (Benedict XVI, Encyclical [Caritas in Veritate](#), n. 32).

I said "dignified" work, and I emphasize it because unfortunately, especially when there is a crisis and the need is pressing, inhumane work increases, slave-labour, work without the proper security or respect for creation, or without respect for rest, celebrations and the family and work on Sundays when it isn't necessary. Work must be combined with the preservation of creation so that this may be responsibly safeguarded for future generations. Creation is not a good to be exploited but a gift to look after. Ecological commitment itself affords an opportunity for new concern in the sectors linked to it, such as energy, and the prevention and removal of different forms of pollution, being alert to forest fires in the wooded land that is your patrimony, and so forth. May caring for creation, and looking after man through dignified work be a common task! Ecology... and also "human ecology"!

Dear friends, I am particularly close to you as I place all your worries and anxieties in the hands of Our Lord and of Our Lady of Bonaria. Blessed John Paul II emphasized that Jesus "worked with

his hands. In fact, his work, which was real physical work, occupied most of his life on this earth, and in this way entered the work of the redemption of man and of the world" (*Address to the Workers of Terni*, 19 March 1981; *L'Osservatore Romano* English edition, 30 March 1981, n. 4, p. 6). It is important to devote oneself to one's own work with diligence, dedication and competence, and it is important to be accustomed to working.

I hope that in the logic of giving freely and of solidarity, it is possible to emerge from this negative phase together, so that secure, dignified and steady employment may be guaranteed.

Please convey my greeting to your families, to the children, the young people and the elderly, I too am taking you with me, especially in my prayers. And I warmly impart the blessing to you for your work and for your social commitment.