



The Holy See

PASTORAL VISIT OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO TURIN

MEETING WITH THE SICK AND DISABLED

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER

Church of Cottolengo
Sunday, 21 June 2015

[Multimedia]

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I could not come to Turin without stopping at this house: the Little House of Divine Providence, founded nearly two centuries ago by St Joseph Benedict Cottolengo. Inspired by the merciful love of God the Father and trusting completely in his Providence, he welcomed poor, abandoned and sick people who could not be admitted to the hospitals of that time.

The exclusion of the poor and the difficulty for the indigent to receive assistance and necessary treatment, is a situation which is unfortunately still present today. Great advancements have been made in medicine and in social assistance, but a throw-away culture has also spread, as a consequence of an anthropological crisis which no longer places mankind at the centre, but consumerism and economic interests (cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 52-53).

Among the victims of this throw-away culture, I would like to remember here in particular the elderly, so many of whom have been welcomed in this home; the elderly are the memory and the wisdom of peoples. Their longevity is not always seen as a gift of God, but at times as a difficult burden to bear, especially when their health is seriously compromised. This mindset does not do society any good, and it is our task to develop an “antidote” to this way of considering the elderly, or people with disabilities, almost as if they were lives no longer worth living. This is a sin, it is a

grave social sin. Instead with such tenderness Cottolengo loved these people! Here we can learn another way of looking at life and at the human person!

Cottolengo meditated long on the Gospel page of Jesus' final judgment, in Chapter 25 of Matthew. He was not deaf to Jesus' call to be given food and drink, to be clothed and visited. Impelled by Christ's charity, he initiated a Work of Charity in which the Word of God showed all its fruitfulness (cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 233). From him we can learn the concreteness of Gospel love, so that many poor and sick may find a "home", to live as in a family, to feel a part of the community and not excluded and tolerated.

Dear sick friends, you are precious members of the Church, you are the flesh of Christ Crucified whom we have the honour to touch and serve with love. With the grace of Jesus you are able to be witnesses and apostles of the divine mercy which saves the world. Looking to Christ Crucified, filled with love for us, and also with the help of those who take care of you, you find the strength and consolation to carry your cross each day.

This Little House's raison d'être is not welfarism, or philanthropy, but the Gospel: the Gospel of the love of Christ is the strength that brought it into being and which makes it go forward: the love of Jesus' predilection for the frailest and weakest. This is at the centre. And for this reason a work such as this does not go forward without prayer, which is the first and most important work of the Little House, as your Founder was fond of repeating (cf. *Detti e pensieri*, n. 24), and as is demonstrated by the six convents of the Sisters of Contemplative Life who are connected to the same Work.

I would like to thank the Sisters, the consecrated Brothers and the Priests here in Turin and in your houses spread throughout the world. Together with many lay workers, volunteers and the "Friends of Cottolengo", you are called to continue, with creative faith, the mission of this great Saint of charity. His charism is fruitful, as demonstrated by Bl. Don Francesco Paleari and Bl. Brother Luigi Bordino, as well as Servant of God Sr Maria Carola Cecchin, the missionary.

May the Holy Spirit always give you the strength and courage to follow their example and to witness with joy the charity of Christ who impels you to serve the weakest, thereby contributing to the growth of the Kingdom of God and of a more welcoming and fraternal world.

I bless you all. May Our Lady protect you. And please, do not forget to pray for me.