



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER FRANCIS
TO THE DELEGATION OF THE
"FOYER NOTRE-DAME DES SANS ABRI
AND THE ASSOCIATION 'LES AMIS DE GABRIEL ROSSET'**

Room adjacent to Paul VI Audience Hall

Wednesday, 13 November 2024

[Multimedia]

Mes chers frères et sœurs, je parlerai en italien, mais vous avez la traduction ici. Merci beaucoup pour votre présence..., les enfants..., c'est beau, c'est beau !

(My dear brothers and sisters, I will speak to you in Italian, but you will have the translation here. Thank you very much for your presence ... the children ... it is good, it is good!)

Dear brothers and sisters!

I am pleased to welcome you and to express to you the Church's gratitude for your mission. You are witnesses of God's tenderness and mercy towards those who are most in need. The three things of God: closeness, compassion and tenderness. Your founder, Gabriel Rosset, the fiftieth anniversary of whose death you commemorate this year, felt lively compassion for the suffering of his brethren; he listened to the cry of the poor and did not turn away or close his eyes. He responded with faith and courage, in a practical way, founding *Notre-Dames des Sans-Abri*.

He knew how to recognize the presence of Christ in the poor: they are our brothers. Let us always remember: "In each of these 'little ones', Christ himself is present. His flesh becomes visible in the flesh of the tortured, the crushed, the scourged, the malnourished, and the exiled... to be acknowledged, touched, and cared for by us" (*Misericordiae Vultus*, 15). Today you carry forward the work of Gabriel Rosset. You too are artisans of God's mercy and compassion: by

accompanying homeless people, you give a concrete face to the Gospel of love. By offering them shelter, a meal, a smile, by extending your hands without fear of dirtying them, you restore their dignity and your commitment touches the heart of our world, often indifferent.

Your founder wanted your mission to be placed under the gaze of the Mother of Christ, the Mother who never ceases to watch over all those who suffer in the body and in the heart. I think this is fundamental because, according to the Bible, mercy is closely linked to the maternal womb (cf. *Message for Lent 2016*, 1). Mercy and compassion, fraternity and openness, the outstretched hand and refusal of the culture of rejection: it is in these concrete gestures of love that the Church becomes a living sign of God's tenderness towards all His children. I invite you to contemplate the Virgin Mary, perfect image of the Church; she enlightens your service to the poorest of the poor.

I like to contemplate Our Lady of the Homeless and Our Lady of Mercy, who opens her arms to welcome everyone, because everyone has a place close to Mary, close to Christ. She is not afraid to extend her mantle to shelter us against the rain and the scorching heat of the sun. She gives her most precious good, who is Jesus, letting the poor come as close to her as possible to receive tenderness and relief from her outstretched hands. Put yourselves in her school. Mary is first and foremost a woman of the *inner life*; she meditates on and treasures in her heart the Word of God, which fuels her every action. She is also an *open* woman, a woman ready for God's surprises. Therefore, she *keeps watch* and *walks*. Mary responds to the needs of our vulnerable brothers and sisters, but above all she anticipates their needs: as at Cana, she knows that the wine is finished. She follows her Son along the road to Calvary; she is not afraid to touch the suffering of the world, when she receives Him in her arms at the foot of the cross.

You, dear friends of *Notre-Dame des Sans-Abri*, are for many a living image of this maternal compassion. With your presence, your listening, you show that Mary and Jesus never cease to walk with their brothers and sisters, those who are too often forgotten. Carry out your service with the strength of love. Allow many men and women to rediscover their dignity and their hope, even in the midst of trials.

I entrust you to the maternal prayer of Our Lady, who watches over you and all the people you accompany. I bless you all from my heart. And please, do not forget to pray for me.

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