



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE **BOLLETTINO**

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BIURO PRASOWE STOLICY APOSTOLSKIEJ دار الصحافة التابعة للكرسي الرسولي

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Audience with volunteers of “Telefono Amico Italia”

At midday today, in the Clementine Hall of the Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the volunteers of “Telefono Amico Italia”, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of its activity.

The following is the full text of the Holy Father’s address to those present.

Holy Father’s address

Dear brothers and sisters,

I am glad to welcome you on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the activity of *Telefono Amico Italia*, and I thank the president for his words of greeting.

Your association is engaged in supporting those who find themselves in conditions of loneliness or confusion, or who are in need of understanding, moral help and someone to listen. It is an important service, especially in the current social context, characterised by many hardships whose origin is often found in isolation and the lack of dialogue. Large cities, although overcrowded, can be the emblem of a way of living that leaves little space for humanity, to which individuals are growing accustomed: widespread indifference; increasingly virtual, less personal communication; a lack of solid values on which to base our existence; and a culture of possession and appearance. In such a context, it is indispensable to favour dialogue and listening.

Dialogue enables us to get to know each other and to understand reciprocal needs. Firstly, it expresses a great respect, because it places people in a position of mutual openness to the best aspects of the interlocutor. In addition, dialogue is an expression of charity since, although it does not ignore differences, it can help to seek out and share approaches with a view to the common good. Through dialogue we can learn to see the other not as a threat, but as a gift from God, who calls to us and asks to be recognised. Dialogue helps people to humanise relationships and overcome misunderstandings. If there were more dialogue – true dialogue! – in families, in the workplace, in politics, many issues would be resolved more easily!

A precondition for dialogue is the capacity to listen, which unfortunately is not very common. Listening to the

other requires patience and attention. Only those who know how to be silent, know how to listen: listening to God, listening to the brother or sister in need of help, listening to a friend, to a relative. God Himself is the most excellent example of listening: every time we pray, He listens to us, without asking anything, and He even precedes us and takes the initiative (cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 24) in granting our requests for help. The attitude of listening, for which God is the model, spurs us to break down the walls of incomprehension and to create bridges of communication, overcoming isolation and closure in our own little world.

Dear friends, through dialogue and listening we can contribute to building a better world, making it a place of welcome and respect, thus opposing divisions and conflicts. I encourage you to continue your valuable service to society with renewed enthusiasm, so that no-one remains isolated, so that the bonds of dialogue are not broken, and so that there is no lack of listening, which is the simplest manifestation of charity towards our brothers.

While I count on your prayers, I entrust you to the protection of the Virgin Mary, woman of silence and listening, and I offer my heartfelt blessing to you, your collaborators, and those you “meet” by telephone in your daily work.

[*Blessing*]

And pray for me!
