



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS
TO THE NATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF THE "MISERICORDIE" OF ITALY
ON THE OCCASION OF THE ANNIVERSARY OF
ITS MEETING WITH POPE JOHN PAUL II ON 14 JUNE 1986**

*Saint Peter's Square
Saturday, 14 June 2014*

Video

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

I address my greeting to all of you who belong to the *Misericordie* of Italy and the *Fratres* groups, and to your families and the people receiving assistance, who were able to join your pilgrimage. I greet Bishop Franco Agostinelli of Prato, your Corrector General, and the national President of your Confederation, Mr Roberto Trucchi, thanking him for the words with which he introduced this event. My gratitude goes to everyone for the important work you do on behalf of the suffering neighbour.

The “*Misericordie*”, an age-old expression of the Catholic laity firmly rooted in the Italian territory, are committed to witness the Gospel of charity among people who are sick, elderly, disabled, among minors, immigrants and the poor. All of your service derives meaning and form from this word: “*misericordia*” [mercy], a Latin word whose etymological meaning is “*miseris cor dare*”, to “give the heart to the wretched”, those in need, those who are suffering.

That is what Jesus did: he opened his heart to the wretchedness of man. The Gospel has a wealth of episodes which present the *misericordia* of Jesus, his love freely given for the suffering and the weak. From the Gospel narratives we are able to understand the closeness, the goodness, the tenderness with which Jesus drew in the suffering people and consoled them, comforted them, and often healed them. By our Teacher’s example, we too are called to draw near, to share the

conditions of the people we meet. It is necessary that our words, our actions, our attitudes express solidarity, the will to not remain alien to the pain of others, and do this with fraternal warmth and without falling into some form of paternalism.

We have at our disposal so much information and so many statistics on poverty and human tribulations. There is a risk of being highly informed bystanders and disembodied from these realities, or to have nice discussions that end up in verbal solutions and disengagement from the real problems. Too many words, too many words, too many words and nothing is done! This is a risk. It isn't yours, you work, you work very well! But there is a risk... When I hear conversations among people who know the statistics: "Such savagery, Father! Such savagery, such savagery!". "But what are you doing about this savagery?". Nothing, I say! And this resolves nothing! We've heard many words! What's needed is work, Christian testimony, going to the suffering, getting close to them as Jesus did. Let us imitate Jesus: He goes to the streets, not planning for the poor or the sick or disabled people that he crosses along the way; but with the first one he encounters, he stops, becoming a presence of care, a sign of the closeness of God who is goodness, providence and love.

The activity of your associations is inspired by the Seven Corporal Works of Mercy, which I would like to recall, because it will be good to hear them again: to feed the hungry; to give drink to the thirsty; to clothe the naked; to harbour the homeless; to visit the sick; to visit the imprisoned; to bury the dead. I encourage you to carry on your work with joy and to model it after Christ's, allowing all who suffer to encounter you and count on you in time of need.

Dear brothers and sisters, thank you! Thank you all again for what you do. Thank you! May the "*Misericordie*" and the "*Fratres*" groups continue to be places of hospitality and generosity, in the sign of authentic merciful love for every person. May the Lord bless you and may Our Lady protect you! Thank you!

[Blessing...] And please don't forget to pray for me. I need it too! Thank you!