ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO THE EMPLOYEES OF THE ITALIAN STATE RAILWAYS

Paul VI Audience Hall
Saturday, 19 December 2015

[Multimedia]

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Welcome!

I thank Engineer Mr Renato Mazzoncini for his words; I greet the president, Ms Ghezzi; and I greet you all.

Ten years ago the Italian State Railways celebrated its first centenary in existence, and this is first of all a reason to thank the Lord. It is also an occasion to thank the many people who have worked very hard to create the railway network in Italy, whose challenging territory requires a great deal of effort in the phases of both its design and construction. Many workers have even lost their lives in this labour. Let us remember all of them. Let us do so to ensure — as far as we can — that this never happens again.

The history of the Italian Railways also attests to its special attention to the poorest, with various past and recent initiatives of solidarity. One of these is that of the Help Centers that have opened in dozens of Italian cities, born of the cooperation between the Railways, local entities and the third sector. They are "antenna help desks", which allow those who are in difficulty to receive attention, care and assistance. We all need these antennae, which allow us to capture the signals of what is happening around us, to be able to perceive the suffering of others, without remaining indifferent. These help desks are a means by which the Railways effectively cooperate in order to keep the country united, not only from a geographical standpoint but also on the social level, in helping to prevent anyone being left behind, and in ensuring that the discrepancy between the 'haves' and the 'have nots' is not accentuated.

Another important initiative is that of the Luigi Di Liegro Homeless Shelter near Termini Station, where yesterday we opened the Door of Charity. The building has been renovated by the Railways

in cooperation with the diocesan Caritas. Five years ago Benedict XVI laid the first stone at the outset of the work to prepare the new premises. The shelter, which receives hundreds of guests daily, and which also provides the service of daytime lodging, performs an essential task in a part of the city where people in search of refuge often gather.

May the Holy Year, which recently opened, teach us this first of all, and impress upon our minds and hearts that mercy is the first and most authentic medicine for mankind — a merciful caress heals so much! — a medicine of which each one has urgent need. It flows constantly and in superabundance from God, but we must also become capable of giving it to each other, so that each one may fully live his or her humanity.

This is precisely what we are reminded by the Holy Doors, which in these days are being opened in all the dioceses of the world: those who pass through them with love will find forgiveness and consolation, and will be encouraged to give and to give of themselves with more generosity, for their own salvation and that of their brothers and sisters. Let us all allow ourselves to be transformed by passing through this spiritual door, in a way that marks our inner life. Let us get engage in the Jubilee of Mercy — we all need a little mercy — so as to renew the fabric of our whole society, rendering it more just and supportive, especially in this "third world war" which has broken out "piecemeal". We are experiencing it.

I understand that the latest monograph just published in the series *L'Italia del treno* [Italy by train] is entitled "Jubilee". It is a collection of photographs retracing the travels of Pontiffs by train. May the esteem that binds us, which is marked by today's encounter, be strengthened in this Holy Year, so that Italy and all countries in the world may become supportive, more authentically human networks, more capable of rejoicing in the love of God and mutual communion.

I ask the Lord to bless you all. I impart my blessing to you and I ask it of the Lord for you. And I ask you not to forget to pray for me. Thank you.