



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 the Members of the Service Centre of the Sardegna Solidale Association

This morning, in the Paul VI Hall, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the members of the Service Centre of the *Sardegna Solidale* Association, celebrating twenty years of activity.

The following is the Pope's address to those present:

Address of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters,

I am pleased to meet with you, representatives of the Service Centre of the *Sardegna Solidale* Association, on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of its foundation, accompanied by Cardinal Angelo Becciu, together with the archbishops of Cagliari, Msgr. Arrigo Miglio, and of Oristano, Msgr. Ignazio Sanna. To all I address my cordial greeting, with a deferential thought for the authorities, in particular for the president of the Sardinia Region, Mr Francesco Pigliaru. I thank the president of *Sardegna Solidale*, Giampiero Farru, for the words with which he introduced this meeting.

You represent the multitude of Sardinian volunteers, who work to provide a generous and necessary service to the last among you, in a territory – that of your beautiful island – rich in natural treasures, history and art, but also affected by poverty and hardship. I would like to express my appreciation for what you have done and are doing for the benefit of the weakest sections of the Sardinian population, turning your attention also to some of the poorest countries in the world. This should be emphasized, because it is a sign that you are not “isolated” but rather, despite the great needs of your home, you have kept the horizon of your solidarity open. From this perspective, you have been able to welcome and include those who have arrived in Sardinia from other lands in search of peace and work.

Your association brings together numerous voluntary organizations, carrying out a considerable service of aggregation and cooperation, aimed at making your effort in favour of those who are in precarious conditions

more qualified and effective. I encourage you to continue with a spirit of understanding and unity; in this way you will be able to spread the culture of solidarity in a more grass-roots way. In order to interpret the authentic needs of the people and find adequate answers to them, it is necessary to maintain an attitude of collaboration with the institutional realities of the territory: I think in particular of the municipalities and parishes, who are close to the people on a daily basis, sharing their labours and hopes.

The culture of solidarity and gratuitousness qualifies volunteerism and contributes in a concrete way to the construction of a fraternal society, at the centre of which is the human person. In your land this culture draws abundantly from its strong Christian roots, that is, the love of God and the love of neighbour. Jesus, in the Gospel, invites us to love God with our whole heart and our neighbour as ourselves (cf. *Mk* 12: 29). It is the love of God that always makes us recognize the neighbour, the brother or sister to love. And this requires personal and voluntary commitment, for which public institutions can and must create favourable general conditions. Thanks to this evangelical “lymph”, your assistance keeps its human dimension and is not depersonalized. Precisely for this reason you volunteers do not perform supplementary work in the social network, but contribute to giving a human and Christian face to our society.

The service of fraternal voluntary work is a choice that makes one free and open to the needs of the other; to the demands of justice, to the defence of life, and to the protection of creation, with a tender and special attention to the sick and especially the elderly, who are a treasure of wisdom!

I encourage you to continue your mission with passion, seeking all the possible and constructive forms for reawakening public opinion to the need to commit oneself to the common good, in support of the weak and the poor. There is a need for people who persevere, who face difficulties with a spirit of unity and always place the ultimate goal, service to others, at the basis of everything. Doing so, you will continue to be a point of reference and an example for all Sardinia.

May you be assisted and sustained by the Virgin Mary, whom the Sardinian people venerate with love in many shrines; may She inspire in you the strength and trust in God always to be a gift for others. I heartily bless you all and your loved ones, and I ask you, please, to pray for me.
