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Other News

Message to laypersons and families

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Dear brothers and sisters,

The life that God has given to us, the foundation of every other good, is precious and fragile at the same time. We experience this wealth and this limit every day, but especially when life is exposed to a threat to its spiritual and bodily, individual and social dimensions. In these moments we see a shadow rise on the horizon that covers some reflection of the divine light that shines in our lives. The fear of falling into danger assails us and our hearts are disquieted. But how can we forget Jesus' words? He reassures us by saying: "Not one [sparrow] falls to the ground without your Father knowing. Why, every hair on your head has been counted. So there is no need to be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows" (*Mt 10: 29b-31*).

The life of man has a great value in the eyes of God. If, in certain circumstances, something is attentive to the health and life itself of many men, and perhaps even our own, we must not feel alone in the face of this enemy. As in these months, when a new virus is spreading in many parts of the world, capable of infecting entire groups and populations very quickly, causing a contagious disease called Covid-19. In many people it causes minor ailments, while in others it causes more severe suffering and, in a very limited number of cases, can even lead to death.

We are all called to face this international health emergency with seriousness, serenity and courage, also through willingness to make sacrifices in our daily lifestyle for the common good: our own good and that of all. Everyone is called to do their part, but not only this: we have the protection of God, Who watches over each one of us with a Father's love, and men and women who share with us the path of life and solidarity in the present and in the time to come. The Church also wishes to be close to every person afflicted by Covid-19, to their family and friends, to the health care and public assistance personnel providing care, and to researchers who are searching for a remedy for this disease.

As the Holy Father's Dicastery responsible for the pastoral care of the laity, family and life, we wish to manifest – at this difficult time – to those who have been affected by Covid-19, or feel threatened by this viral infection, our closeness, our affection and our prayer. To the lay people who work as doctors, nurses, first responders and scientific researchers, committed to alleviating the suffering and anxiety caused by this contagion and to discovering effective forms of treatment for this disease, we say thank you for the generosity of their dedication and encourage them to spend the best energies and intellectual talents God has given them for this good cause.

We would like to address a special thought to families, who are called, with love and a great sense of responsibility, to take charge of accompanying their members affected by Covid-19 or to take care of the elderly who cannot leave home because of the risk of contagion, those who are weaker due to pre-existing illness, and children who have to stay home from school for health reasons. This is a burdensome task especially for families living in places in the world that are poor in economic resources and social assistance, but also for those in which the husband, wife or other family members risk losing their jobs due to the consequences of the epidemic on production, trade, transport, education and other civil activities.

In these difficult circumstances, the communion of love between spouses and their parents and children is a precious resource for the whole of society and for each person at risk of experiencing loneliness. Loneliness is an ailment of the person which, in the case of the danger of contracting an illness, is added to the physical illness caused by the disease. "It is not right that the man should be alone" (*Gen 2: 18*): the wise foresight of God the Creator in thinking about the spousal relationship between man and woman reveals all its truth even in the situation caused by the spread of a debilitating infection for those affected and for social relations between all citizens. Truly, in these circumstances, the family can become a resource, a force that drives and spreads each person's sense of responsibility, of solidarity, of fortitude and prudence, of sharing and mutual help in difficulties.

The Dicastery joins with Pope Francis, who expresses his "closeness to those who are sick with the coronavirus, to the healthcare workers who are caring for them, to civil authorities and to all those who are involved in assisting patients and stopping the contagion" (General Audience, 13 February 2020), and embraces each one of you, dear laypersons and families, with the sign of unity and of peace among all men, that of the Cross of our Lord.

Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life.
