



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE BOLLETTINO

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Audience with participants in the International Meeting organized by “Somos Community Care”

This morning, in the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the participants in the International Meeting organized by “Somos Community Care” in collaboration with the Pontifical Academy for Life.

The following is the address delivered by the Pope to those present during the course of the audience:

Address of the Holy Father

Dear friends, good morning and welcome!

I am pleased to meet with you. I greet Doctor Ramon Tallaj, founder of SOMOS Community Care, and Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia, President of the Pontifical Academy for Life. Together, in these days, you have focused on the importance of re-evaluating the role and presence of the family doctor in healthcare and the social sphere. This is very good, because the family doctor is a fundamental figure, who combines competence and proximity. I would like to highlight briefly two aspects of this mission, taken precisely from the understanding of a family doctor: that of being *a doctor* and that of being “*of the family*”.

First, *the doctor*, that is, the one who provides care. Science today has made significant strides, allowing us to access therapies that were unimaginable just a few decades ago. Yet medicine, even the most technologically advanced, is always first and foremost a human encounter, characterized by caring treatment, closeness and listening. When we are sick, we look to the doctor, to be not only a competent professional, but also to be a friendly presence we can count on, who instils confidence in healing and who, even when this is not possible, does not leave us alone, but continues to look us in the eye and assist us, until the end. Saint Luke, whom Saint Paul calls “the beloved physician” (*Col 4:14*), a colleague of yours, describes Jesus’ actions toward the sick in this way (cf. *Lk 5:12-26; 8:40-56*): he approached them, entered their homes, talked with them, listened to them, welcomed them in their suffering and healed them. The family doctor is similarly present and close, offering warmth as well as professional care, because he knows his patients and their loved ones personally and walks

with them, day by day, even at the cost of personal sacrifice.

This leads us to the second reason why the family doctor's role is valuable: being a member *of the family*. This *community dimension* of care, which requires "contextualizing each patient in his or her relationships" and in his or her "affective and social ties".^[1] The presence of the family doctor, in fact, helps to create a network of affection, sharing and solidarity around the sick person, going beyond the diagnostic and therapeutic phases. This strengthens human relationships and transforms suffering into a moment of communion to be experienced together, benefiting not only the patient, but also the caregiver, family members and the extended community. This approach helps to avoid the risk that the person suffering and those close to him or her will be caught within a bureaucratic and overly technical system; or worse, from becoming victims of a market mentality that has little to do with health, especially when it comes to the elderly and frail. *Care and familiarity* are two gifts of great value to those who suffer!

Therefore, dear friends, the work you are doing is important. I renew my blessing on your project and pray for you. I ask you, please, do not forget to pray for me. Thank you!

[1] Interview with Monsignor Renzo Pegoraro on "*The Pope's Window*", 15 November 2023.
