



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE  
**BOLLETTINO**

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**Assembly of the Diocese of Rome in the presence of the Holy Father Francis, in the Basilica of Saint John Lateran**

This afternoon, the Holy Father Francis visited the Papal Basilica of Saint John Lateran on the occasion of the Assembly of the Diocese of Rome at the end of the “(In)Equalities” programme, initiated last February on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the conference “The responsibility of Christians in response to the expectations of charity and justice in the city of Rome”.

Upon arrival, the Pope was welcomed by Archbishop Baldassare Reina, vicar general of His Holiness and archpriest of the Papal Basilica of Saint John Lateran.

The following is the text of the address delivered by Pope Francis during the meeting:

**Address of the Holy Father**

*Dear brothers and sisters,*

I thank you for being here to celebrate together this important moment for the diocese of Rome. I greet the authorities present, and all of you who are here also representing your parish communities and the realities whom you serve. And I also thank all of those who have worked to restore to the memory of all of us the Conference held fifty years ago, and which has passed into history with the name “Conference on the evils of Rome”. It was an event that marked the ecclesial and social path of the City and, on that occasion, the Church of Rome listened to the many sufferings that marked it, inviting everyone to reflect on the responsibilities of Christians in the face of the ills of the Church, the ills of the City, entering into dialogue with it and rousing the civil, political and Christian conscience of many.

I have followed the various passages of the work done over the course of this year and listened with interest to the summaries and testimonies which, unfortunately, once again bring us face to face with a sad reality: even

today, and still today, there are many inequalities and poverty that affect many inhabitants of the City. While this pains us, it also makes us realize how far we still have to go. Knowing that there are people living on the streets, young people who cannot find a job or a home, the sick and elderly who have no access to care, young people sinking into drug addiction and many other “modern” addictions, people marked by mental suffering who live in a state of abandonment or despair. And this cannot just be a statistic; these are faces, these are stories of our brothers and sisters that touch us and question us: what can we do? Do we see in the wounded history of these people the face of the suffering Christ? Are we capable of seeing it? Do we perceive the problem in order to take charge of it? What can we do together?

Starting from these questions and from the Word we have heard, I would like to reflect with you on three aspects: *bringing the good news to the poor*, *healing the tear*, and *sowing hope*.

First of all, *bringing the good news to the poor*. The poor will always be with us. The poor are the flesh of Christ and, like a sacrament, they make Him visible to our eyes. When I confess, when there is the opportunity, I ask the person: “But tell me, do you give alms?”. “Yes, Father”. “And tell me, when you give alms, do you look in the eyes of the poor person to whom you are giving? Do you touch his hand?” And they answer, “No”. They toss them a coin and go on their way. They do not care about that human suffering that is a poor person. The poor will always be with us, they are the flesh of Christ and, like a sacrament, they make Him visible to our eyes. Jesus does not offer us a magic solution to poverty, but asks us to bring them “the good news”. And the good news to proclaim to the poor is first and foremost to tell them that they are loved by the Lord and that in the eyes of God they are precious, that their dignity, often trampled by the world, is sacred before God. But many times, we Christians say this in words, and then we do not perform the actions that make them credible. Please: the poor person cannot be a number, he or she cannot be a problem or, worse still, a reject. He is our brother; he is flesh of our flesh. I am pleased that, in this diocese, many people spend themselves every day for the poor: I think of volunteers, the workers for Caritas and the other bodies and associations present in the area, the many citizens silently carry out good works; at the same time, however, we must feel the question of poverty as a matter of ecclesial urgency, that becomes a commitment and responsibility for everyone, and always. The Church is called to take on a style that places at the centre those who are marked by the different forms of poverty – there are many of them – the poor in food and hope, those who hunger for justice, who thirst for a future, those in need of true bonds in order to face life. Let us make ourselves present with the poor, and become for them a sign of God’s tenderness! God is present with three attitudes: proximity, compassion and tenderness. And a Christian who does not approach, who is not compassionate and who is not tender is not a Christian. Proximity, compassion and tenderness. In this way we imitate God.

Secondly, *mending the tear*. It is an image that I take from the title given to this evening’s meeting. It is true, something is torn! The great social fabric, as a result of inequalities, experiences painful daily ruptures. How can we accept that in our city, tons of food are thrown away and at the same time there are families who have nothing to eat? The poor go in search of the food that the restaurants throw away every evening. How can we accept that there are thousands of empty spaces, and thousands of people who sleep on the pavements? That some rich people have access to all the care they need, while the poor, when they are sick, cannot get decent care? A city that helplessly witnesses these contradictions is a city torn apart, as is our entire planet. This is why it is necessary to mend this tear by committing ourselves to building alliances that place the human person, his or her dignity, at the centre. In order to do this, we need to work together, to harmonize differences, share each other’s gifts and the missions we have received. And this also means growing in dialogue: dialogue with institutions and associations, dialogue with the school and the family, dialogue between the generations, dialogue with everyone, even with those who think differently. In order to mend the tear, we need the patience of dialogue without prejudice, passionately discussing ideas, plans and useful proposals to renew the fabric of the city. Together we can risk setting out on new paths, overcoming the virus of indifference, which infects us all, as if what happens in the corners of our city and the planet does not have anything to do with us. “It’s not my problem”. To mend, we need first and foremost to leave behind this indifference and to let ourselves be directly involved! It would be good if we came out of this evening’s meeting with some tangible, verifiable commitments along the lines of a common effort aimed at actions capable of helping us overcome inequalities. But, in the meantime, I would like to ask you this: accord greater value, in ordinary pastoral care and in catechesis, to the social doctrine of the Church. It is important, indeed it is important to educate consciences in the social doctrine of the Church, so that the Gospel may be translated into the various situations of today and make us witnesses

of justice, peace, and fraternity. And weavers of a new social and supportive network in the city, to heal the ruptures that tear it apart.

Finally, *sowing hope*. It is a commitment we are called to take on also in view of the now imminent Jubilee, which I wanted to be marked by Christian hope. In the Bull of Indiction of the Jubilee, I invited everyone to think about signs of hope in favour of peace, human life, the sick, the imprisoned, migrants, the elderly, and the poor. I strongly appeal to you all to carry out concrete works of hope. The multiplicity of social problems examined and also presented this evening could discourage us to the point of saying “there is nothing we can do”. But Christian hope, on the other hand, is always active because it is animated by the certainty that it is the Lord who guides history and that in Him we can build what humanly seems impossible. Sisters, brothers, hope does not disappoint! It never disappoints. Let us go down the road of hope. In this city there have been men and women who, when faced with problems, have not stood by and neither have they merely said or written many things. I am thinking especially of some priests, true men of hope, such as Don Luigi Di Liegro; I am thinking of the many laypeople who have set to work, answering the need to sow a seed of goodness, to embark on processes in the hope that someone else would take care of that tiny seed to the point of making it become a big tree. If today, for example, the drive to voluntary work is very strong, it is because someone believed in it and began with small steps. That goodness spread to others, to the point of becoming a shared approach. Today we must initiate new processes, new processes of hope: dreaming of hope and building hope through our commitment, which is a commitment of responsibility and solidarity! Take the risk! All of you, take a chance on charity, do not be afraid to dream of big undertakings, even if these begin with small commitments. The poet Charles Peguy says this, and, in this regard, I conclude with what he said about hope: “Faith is a faithful Bride. Charity is a Mother. Hope is a child from nothing. Yet it is this child who will cross the worlds”. Let us go forward with hope.

Dear brothers, dear sisters, we too can cross the worlds of poverty, bringing the hope of the Gospel! Thank you for all that you do in the Church and in the city of Rome. I pray for you, that you may be bold witnesses of the Gospel, capable of bringing the good news *of* the poor and the good news *to* the poor, of mending the tears and sowing hope!

And you too, please, do not forget to pray for me. Thank you.

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