



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE  
**BOLLETTINO**

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## **Audience with the Presidents and National Directors of Caritas in Latin America and the Caribbean**

This morning, in the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the presidents and national directors of Caritas in Latin America and the Caribbean, to whom he delivered the following address:

### **Address of the Holy Father**

Dear brothers in the episcopate,

Esteemed national directors of Caritas in Latin America and the Caribbean,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you here today, in what is the second training course promoted by Caritas Latin America and the Caribbean. It is so because it represents the consolidation of processes aimed at creating that culture of care that we have chosen to call *salvaguardia*, “safeguarding”.

The dictionary of the *Real Academia de la Lengua* defines this word as “*custodia, amparo, garantía*”, “custody, protection, guarantee”, and I imagine that you all think of these concepts when you talk about it.

Alongside this meaning, however, there is another that caught my attention: “a sign that in times of war is placed, by order of military commanders, at the entrance to villages or at the doors of houses, so that their soldiers would not harm them”. As I suppose it must have happened to you too, the texts of the prophet Ezekiel (9:4) and of the Revelation (7:3) immediately came to my mind. The Lord asks His angel: “Mark an X on the foreheads of those who grieve and lament over all the abominations practiced”. The Lord asks us, His envoys, His angels in the sense of mission, even if not of purity, to put the sign of his blessed cross on the foreheads of all those who come to our Caritas, groaning and lamenting over so many injustices, even abominations, perpetrated against them.

To “virtually” place this sign on every assisted person, on every professional, on every human being we meet, is to recognize in them their dignity as brothers and sisters in Christ, as redeemed by the blood of the Saviour, to see in them the open wound of the Redeemer who offers us His outstretched hand so that we may recognize the mystery of His incarnation.

It is also to accept the inescapable imperative of the Lord, who commands us: “do not touch my anointed ones” (*Ps 105:15*). In this sense, safeguarding is a divine name, it is Christ Himself written on the forehead of every man and woman and, as in a mirror, in the heart of each one of us who, in our fragility, want to be bearers of His love, in small gestures of charity and care.

May Jesus reward all your efforts, may the Holy Spirit guide your labours and may the Holy Virgin cover you with her mantle, so that you may learn from her to bring care and safeguarding to all people.

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