



The Holy See

VIDEO MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS FOR CARITAS OF ROME

Tuesday, 28 April 2015

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good evening,

Someone informed me that this evening in the prestigious Brancaccio Theatre you, who are guests of the *Caritas* centres of our Church of Rome, will be actors in a play entitled: “*Se non fosse per te*”, which recounts the real and difficult experiences of abandonment and marginalization, which you yourselves have experienced. This theatrical initiative speaks of your love for sons and daughters, for parents, for life, for God.

I am happy to be among you in this way, to delight in your courage, to tell you not to lose trust and hope. God loves us, He loves everyone!

I consider the means by which you will be speaking to the city an occasion for dialogue and meaningful exchange. I am certain that on stage — revealing your hidden capacities, coached by experienced professionals who were able to help you actors draw out your talent and potential — you and those in the audience will be amazed at the treasures being offered. Who would think that a homeless person would have so much to teach us? Who would think that he or she could be a saint?

However, this evening you will make the stage a place from which to pass on valuable lessons on love, on the needs of others, on solidarity, on how to find the love of the Father in difficulties.

Poverty is the great lesson that Jesus gave us when He went down into the waters of the Jordan to be baptized by John the Baptist. He didn't do so out of a need for penitence, for conversion; He did so to put himself in the midst of the people, the people in need of forgiveness, in the midst of

us sinners, and to take upon himself the burden of our sins. This is the way that He chose to console us, to save us, to free us from our misery. What gives us true freedom, true salvation and true happiness is His compassionate, tender and sharing love. The Good Samaritan who gathers us, beaten by robbers.

St Gregory of Nyssa, a great theologian of antiquity, wrote: "Consider carefully the poor in the Gospel, and you will discover wherein lies their dignity: they take on the face of the Lord. In his mercy He has given them his face". And St Augustine said: "On earth Christ is indigent in the person of his poor. Thus one should fear the heavenly Christ and recognize Him on earth: on earth He is poor, in heaven He is rich. In his humanity He ascended into heaven as a rich man, but He still remains among us in the poor man who suffers".

I too would like to make these words my own. You are not a burden for us. You are the treasure without which our attempts to discover the Lord's face are in vain.

Several days after my election, I received a letter offering congratulations and prayer from you. I remember immediately responding to you, telling you that I carry you in my heart and that I am at your service. I confirm those words. On that occasion I asked you to pray for me. I renew that request. I truly need it.

I also thank all those who work at our *Caritas*. I feel they are like my hands, the hands of the Bishop, in touching the Body of Christ. I also thank the many volunteers, from parishes in Rome and from other parts of Italy. In so doing, they discover a world that is calling for attention and solidarity: men and women seeking affection, relationships, dignity, and together to whom we all can experience charity by learning to welcome, listen and to give of ourselves.

How I would like this city, scattered in every age with people permeated with the love of God — to think of St Lawrence (the poor were his jewels), St Pammachius (a Roman senator, a convert, completely dedicated to the service of the least), St Fabiola (the first to build a home for the poor in Porto Romano), St Philip Neri, Bl. Angelo Paoli, St Joseph Labre (a wayfarer), and Don Luigi Di Liegro (founder of our *Caritas* in Rome) — I was saying, how I would like Rome to be able to shine of "*pietas*" for the suffering, of welcome for those who flee from war and death, of availability, of smiles and magnanimity for those who have lost hope.

How I would like the Church of Rome to be ever more an attentive and caring mother to the weak. We all have weaknesses, all of us have them, each of us has our own. How I would like, when a poor person enters the church, that prayerful parish communities would kneel in veneration in the same manner as when the Lord enters! How I would like this, that we touch the flesh of Christ present in the poor of this city!

With your offering, this evening's theatre product, I am certain, you will be helping these

sentiments to grow. Thank you!

Pending the opportunity to meet you in person, just as recently took place in the Sistine Chapel, I convey my paternal blessing.

May the Lord help us to recognize his face in the poor! May the Virgin Mary accompany us on this journey! And I ask all of you, please: do not forget to pray for me! Thank you!