



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO MEMBERS OF THE APOSTOLIC MOVEMENT OF THE BLIND (MAC)

*Clementine Hall
Saturday, 17 November 2018*

[Multimedia]

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

It is a joy to see so many of you here, 90 years since the birth of your association. Maria Motta, a blind but very courageous woman, was born in Argentina in the beautiful city of Rosario. When she returned to Italy with her parents she devoted herself with human and Christian zeal to teaching, but it was not enough for her: in 1928, she established a community among the blind — already active in France — based on the model of the Apostolate of Prayer. From this small seed grew an association which spread throughout the Italian territory and was approved by Pope Saint [John XXIII](#).

In a prophetic way your Foundress conceived of bringing together the blind people of her time, so that they could meet and support each other. The presence of sighted people, from the earliest years, gradually strengthened the movement, so that it did not turn in on itself and on the problems related to lack of sight. Maria Motta sought to form autonomous people capable of bearing witness to the faith even through their own disability. Today all this is evident. You are strongly united, the blind and the sighted, joined by a unique journey of sharing and promoting people with disabilities, not only because it is envisaged by your statutes but above all through that natural Christian friendship that characterizes your journeys of faith.

I reaffirm that the best response to offer our society — which, at times tends to marginalize people with disabilities — is the ‘weapon’ of “love: not that false, saccharine and sanctimonious love, but that which is true, concrete and respectful. To the extent that one is accepted and loved, included in the community and supported in looking to the future with confidence, the true path of life

evolves and one experiences enduring happiness” ([Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to Participants in the Conference organized by the Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization](#), 21 October 2017).

It is a cause of joy for the ecclesial community to know that you, even today, as true missionary disciples of the Gospel, are open to the needs of the world’s poorest and most suffering people. Rather than turning in on yourselves and on the same disability, you have courageously responded to Jesus’ invitation: “I was hungry and you gave me food, [...] I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me” (cf. Mt 25:35-36). Ever since Pope Saint [Paul VI](#) published the historical Encyclical [Populorum progressio](#), the amb has responded actively, and today you also look back on 50 years of cooperation with the poor countries of the South of the world, where the blind are more numerous and still live in very difficult conditions.

This 90-year journey has enabled the Apostolic Movement of the Blind to understand ever better the specific charism entrusted to it within the Church, a charism that is composed essentially of two elements. The first is *sharing among the blind and the sighted*, as the fruit of solidarity in reciprocity, with a view to a fruitful path of ecclesial and social inclusion. The second is *the choice of the poor*, a choice that, in various ways and forms, is proper to the entire Church. In this way you cooperate in cultivating a poor Church for the poor, experiencing that they have much to teach us, and that placing them at the centre is a privileged way of evangelization. Your concrete commitment to help and support the poor makes you protagonists in the work of evangelization that the Church is carrying out in step with the least. Indeed, we all “are called to find Christ in them, to lend our voice to their causes, but also to be their friends, to listen to them, to speak for them and to embrace the mysterious wisdom which God wishes to share with us through them” (cf. Apostolic Exhortation [Evangelii gaudium](#), 198).

Especially after the Second Vatican Council, your Movement has generously opened itself to the task of human promotion both in Italy and in the poorest countries. The first sector of activity that was quickly established was precisely that of solidarity with the blind of the poorest countries. It took shape within the association, to the point of involving all your groups and various Italian dioceses. I congratulate you on the work carried out in these 50 years of cooperation with hundreds of missionaries and workers in the fields of health, education and social integration. And this missionary work of practical closeness to the poorest brothers and sisters has spurred and fostered your attention even to those who are least and most remote in the national territory, in favour of blind elderly, blind students, people with multiple impairments, parents and children who experience the hardship of blindness. All this contributes to spreading the culture of acceptance, helping many people and many families. Although small in the face of the enormity of the world’s problems, we are strong in God’s love and are all “called to watch over and protect the fragile world in which we live, and all its peoples” (Apostolic Exhortation [Evangelii gaudium](#), 216).

Dear friends, continue your journey with steadfast confidence, aware of the fact that the future of

humanity lies in sharing and in friendship above all with the poorest and most abandoned. Thank you for your witness. And please, remember to pray for me. Thank you.