



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF POPE FRANCIS
TO THE ARCHBISHOP OF AGRIGENTO
ON THE OCCASION OF THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF THE VISIT TO LAMPEDUSA**

*To my Esteemed Brother
Francesco Montenegro
Archbishop of Agrigento*

The anniversary of my visit to the Island of Lampedusa evokes in my heart feelings of gratitude to the Lord for having been given the opportunity to go to that corner of Sicily to pray for the all too many victims of tragedies at sea; to carry out an act of closeness to the immigrants seeking a better life and to reinvigorate the attention being given to their tragedy; to express gratitude to the residents of Lampedusa and Linosa occupied in the commendable work of solidarity, supported by associations, volunteers and the security forces. The spiritual and emotional presence of all Italian Catholic communities together with the Church of Agrigento, was perceived in that encounter so fraught with meaning. At various levels and in a multitude of forms that presence plays an active part in the reception of immigrants.

One year later the problem of immigration is worsening and more tragedies are unfortunately following each other in persistent succession. It is difficult for our heart to accept the death of these, our brothers and sisters, who faced grueling voyages to escape from tragedies, poverty, wars, conflicts, often in connection with international politics. I return once more in spirit to that spot in the Mediterranean to weep with so many grieving and to cast flowers of the prayer of suffrage for the women, men and children who are victims of this seemingly endless tragedy. It demands to be faced not with the logic of indifference but with the logic of hospitality and sharing, in order to protect and promote the dignity and centrality of every human being.

I encourage the Christian communities and every person of goodwill to continue to bend down and lend a helping hand to all those who are in need, without counting the cost, without fear, with tenderness and understanding. At the same time, I hope that the competent Institutions, especially

at the European level, will be more courageous and generous in aiding refugees.

With these wishes, I impart to you, dear Brother, to those who are participating in the various moments of prayer and reflection and to the entire Diocesan Community the desired Apostolic Blessing.

From the Vatican, 23 June 2014

Faternally,

FRANCIS