



The Holy See

PASTORAL VISIT TO CAGLIARI

MEETING WITH THE POOR AND PRISON INMATES

ADDRESS OF HOLY FATHER FRANCIS

*Cathedral of Cagliari
Sunday, 22 September 2013*

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Thank you all for being here today. I see exhaustion in your faces but I also see hope. Feel loved by the Lord and also by many good people who aid and alleviate their neighbour's suffering with their prayers and action. I feel at home here. And I also hope that you feel at home in this Cathedral, as we say in Latin America: "this home is your home". It is your home.

Here we feel in a strong and tangible way that we are all brothers and sisters. Here the only Father is our heavenly Father and the only Teacher is Jesus Christ. Now the first thing that I wanted to share with you is precisely the joy of having Jesus as Teacher and as a model for our lives. Let us look to him! This gives us so much strength and consolation in our weaknesses, in our misery and in our difficulties. We all have difficulties, all of us. All of us here have difficulties. All of us here — all of us — have miseries and all of us here have weaknesses. No one here is better than another. We are all equal before the Father, all of us!

1. *Looking at Jesus we see he chose the path of humility and service.* Rather, he himself is this path. Jesus was not indecisive; he was not indifferent. He made a decision and followed it through until the end. He decided to become man and as a man to become a servant until his death on the Cross. This is the way of love, there is no other. Therefore we see that love is not simply social assistance and not in the least social assistance to reassure consciences. No, that is not love, that is business, those are transactions. Love is free. Charity, love is life choice, it is a way of being, a

way of life, it is a path of humility and of solidarity. There is no other way for this love: to be humble and in solidarity with others. This word *solidarity* in this culture of waste — what is not used is discarded — allows only those to remain who feel just, who feel pure and who feel clean. Poor things! This word *solidarity* runs the risk of being deleted from the dictionary because it is a word that bothers us, it bothers us. Why? Because it requires you to look at another and give yourself to another with love. It is better to delete it from the dictionary because it bothers us. And as for us no, let us say: this is the way, humility and solidarity. Why? Because we priests invented it? No! It was Jesus; he said it! And we want to take this path. Christ's humility is not moralism or a feeling. Christ's humility is real; it is the choice of being small, of staying with the lowliest and with the marginalized, staying among all of us sinners. Be careful, this is not an ideology! It is a way of being and a way of life that comes from love and from God's heart.

This is the first point and I am very pleased to speak to all of you. Let's look at Jesus: he is our joy but also our strength, our certainty because he is the sure path: humility, solidarity, service. There is no other way. In the statue of Our Lady of Bonaria, Christ is in Mary's arms. Like a good mother, she shows us this, she tells us to trust him.

2. It is not enough to look, we must *follow*! This is the second aspect. Jesus did not come into the world to be in a parade, but to be seen! He did not come for this. Jesus is the path and *a path is for walking and following*. Now I want first of all to thank the Lord for your commitment to following him, and for your effort and suffering within the prison walls. Let us continue to trust him, he will give your heart hope and joy! I want to thank him for all of you who are generously dedicated to works of mercy here in Cagliari and in all of Sardinia. I would like to encourage you to continue on this path, to move forward together, striving to preserve among you first and foremost charity. This is very important. We cannot follow Jesus on the path of love unless we first love others, unless we force ourselves to work together, to understand each other and to forgive each another, recognizing our own limits and mistakes. We must do works of mercy and with mercy! Putting our heart in them. Works of charity with love, with tenderness and always with humility! Do you know what? Sometimes we also find arrogance in serving the poor! I am sure that you all have seen this; arrogance in serving those who are in need of our service. Some put on a show, they say what they do with the poor; some exploit the poor for their own personal interests or the interests of the group. I know this, it is human but it is not right! This is not Jesus' way. And I will tell you more: this is a sin! It is a grave sin because it is using the poor, those who are in need, who are Jesus' flesh, for my own vanity. I use Jesus for my vanity and this is a grave sin! It would be better if these people stayed at home!

Therefore following Jesus on the path of charity, going with him to the existential outskirts. "The love of Christ impels us!", Paul said (cf. 2 Cor 5:14). For the Good Shepherd what is far, what is on the margins, what is lost and unappreciated is the object of greater care and the Church cannot but make her own this special love and attention. The first in the Church are those who are the most in need, humanly, spiritually, materially, the neediest.

3. And by following Christ on the path of charity, *we spread hope*. Spreading hope: this is the third conviction that I would like to share with you. Today Italian society is in great need of hope and especially Sardinia. Those who have political and civil responsibilities have their own duty and as citizens we must actively support. Some members of the Christian community are called to work in politics that is the highest form of charity, like Paul VI said. As Church we all have a strong responsibility to spread hope through works of solidarity, always seeking to collaborate in the best possible with public institutions with respect for their respective responsibilities. *Caritas* is an expression of the community and the strength of the Christian community is to make society grow from within, as leaven. I think of your projects with detainees in prisons, I think of the volunteer work of many associations, of the solidarity with the families who suffer most from unemployment. For this I say to you: Courage! Don't let yourselves be robbed of hope and keep going! May they not steal it from you! On the contrary: spread hope! Thank you, dear friends! I bless you all, together with your families. And I thank you all!

After praying the Our Father, the Holy Father said:

May the Lord bless all of you: your families, your problems, your joys, your hopes. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. And please, I ask you to pray for me: I need it!