



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO MEMBERS OF THE INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC SOCIETY FOR GIRLS (ACISJF)

Saturday, 18 April 2015

[Multimedia]

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I welcome you, members of the International Catholic Society for Girls, on the occasion of your General Assembly. In revisiting this place your aim is to rediscover the enthusiasm which was at the origin of your society, with the encouragement of my Predecessor, [Pope Leo XIII](#), and to manifest your fidelity to the Successor of Peter today.

I express my gratitude for your generous commitment to serving girls who live in precarious situations of uncertainty and hardship. Their increasing number and the many forms of poverty which face them challenge us and must inspire new creativity in order to offer them the material and spiritual support they need. Yes, it is true happiness to serve others, like Jesus. Through your ongoing service of hospitality — how much hospitality these young girls need, they need hospitality — as well as reflection on how to face the new challenges brought by today's world, such as the phenomenon of migration, your work seeks to be at the service of life and of human dignity, bearing witness to "true faith in the incarnate Son of God is inseparable from self-giving, ... from service" (Apostolic Exhortation [Evangelii gaudium](#), n. 88). The girls whom you serve first of all need to receive attention and be listened to. That human and divine "apostolate of the ear" tires, it's tiring, but it does so much good! They need this. In this way you can help them grow in trust, find points of reference and become mature adults and while their spirituality is nourished by Gospel values. May you be credible witnesses for them, so that they may experience the joy of knowing they are loved by God, their Father, and the call to happiness!

At the same time, I invite you to allow yourselves to learn from these young girls whom you stand beside and help. Even in their difficulties, they often bear witness to the essential virtues of fraternity and solidarity. Furthermore they remind us that we are fragile and that we depend on

God and on others. May the Father's merciful gaze touch and help us to welcome our poverty in order to move forward with faith, and to commit ourselves together to a "revolution of tenderness". This is a challenge for you: bring about a revolution of tenderness. Regarding this revolution, Jesus opened the way to us through his Incarnation. It is beautiful to be his missionary disciples who console, enlighten, soothe, set free and guide. The experience which He gave us through His resurrection is a vital power which permeates the world (cf. *ibid.*, n. 276) and on which you lean every day because it corresponds to the deepest aspiration of the heart.

Dear friends, I hope that the feeling of belonging to the great family of the Church grows in you. I ask you to continue to joyfully proclaim the Gospel to everyone, keeping in mind the diversity of cultures, religious traditions, and background of the girls whom you desire to serve, as well as the wealth that demands to be accepted with respect. May fraternity be established among you in order to bring to fruition with enthusiasm your mission of service to the little ones, for whom Jesus has a preferential love! I entrust you to the intercession of the Virgin Mary and I ask God to shower you with His blessings, as well as the girls whom you welcome and their families. I ask you all to please pray for me.