



The Holy See

PASTORAL VISIT OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO POMPEII AND NAPLES

MEETING WITH THE SICK AT THE BASILICA DEL GESÙ NUOVO

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER

Naples

Saturday, 21 March 2015

[Multimedia]

It isn't easy to reach out to a sick person. Life's most beautiful things and most miserable things are modest, are hidden. Out of modesty, one tries to hide the greatest love; and out of modesty, we also seek to hide the things that show our human misery. This is why, when visiting a sick person, it is necessary to go to him or her, because the modesty of life hides them. Visit the sick. And when there are lifelong illnesses, when we have diseases that mark an entire life, we prefer to hide them, because to visit a sick person means visiting our own illness, that which we have inside. It is having the courage to say to oneself: I too have some disease in my heart, in my soul, in my spirit, I too am spiritually ill.

God created us to change the world, to be efficient, to rule over Creation: it is our task. But when we are confronted with disease, we see that this illness prevents this: that man, that woman who was born that way, or whose body has become that way, it is like saying "no" — seemingly — to the mission of transforming the world. This is the mystery of sickness. One can approach illness only in the spirit of faith. We can draw near to a sick man, woman, boy or girl, only if we look to Him who took all of our sickness upon Himself, if we become accustomed to looking at Christ Crucified. The only explanation for this "failure", this human failure, a lifetime of sickness, is there. The only explanation is in Christ Crucified.

I say to you, sick people, that if you cannot understand the Lord, I ask the Lord to enable you to

understand in your heart that you are the flesh of Christ, that you are Christ Crucified among us, that you are the brothers and sisters closest to Christ. It is one thing to look at a Crucifix and it's another thing to look at a man, woman, child who is sick, in other words crucified there in their illness: they are the living flesh of Christ.

Thanks so much to you volunteers! Thank you so much for spending your time caressing the flesh of Christ, serving the living Christ Crucified. Thank you! And I also say thank you to you doctors and nurses. Thank you for doing this work, thank you for not making your profession a business. Thanks to so many of you who follow the example of the Saint who is here, who worked here in Naples: serving without accumulating wealth in the service. When medicine is transformed into commerce, a business, it is like when a priest acts in the same way: he loses the core of his vocation. I ask all of you Christians of the diocese of Naples not to forget what Jesus asked of us and what is also written in the "protocol" on which we will be judged: I was sick and you visited me (cf. Mt 25:36). We will be judged on this. The world of illness is a world of pain. Sick people suffer, they reflect the suffering Christ: there is no need to fear drawing near to Christ who is suffering. Thank you so much for all that you do. Let us pray that all Christians of the diocese may have more awareness of this, and let us pray that the Lord give perseverance to you and to so many volunteers in this service of caressing the suffering flesh of Christ. Thank you.