



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO MEMBERS OF THE MOVEMENT OF CHRISTIAN WORKERS

Saturday, 16 January 2016

[Multimedia]

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

With pleasure I welcome you and I thank the President for his words to me. I extend a fraternal welcome to the Pastors who wished to be here with you, and several of them have come from far away. I greet all of you and I thank your two representatives, Maria and Giovanni, for the testimony they wrote.

In her testimony, Maria mentioned your vocation, speaking of the “vocation of work”. It’s true: work is a vocation, for it arises from the call that God addressed to man from the beginning, that he “cultivate and keep” our common home (cf. Gen 2:15). Thus, despite the evil that has corrupted the world as well as human action, “it is through free, creative, participatory and mutually supportive labour that human beings express and enhance the dignity of their lives” (*Evangeli**i Gaudium*, n. 192). How can we correctly respond to this vocation, which calls us to actively imitate the tireless work of the Father and Jesus who, the Gospel says, “are ever active” (cf. Jn 5:17)?

I would like to suggest three words that can help us. The first is *education*. To educate means to “draw out”. It is the capacity to draw forth the best from one’s heart. It is not just about teaching some technical skill or imparting ideas, but is about rendering both ourselves and the world around us more human. And it refers in a special way to work: we need to formulate a new “humanism of work”. For we live in a time when workers are being exploited; in a time, where work is not really at the service of personal dignity, but is slave labour. We must form, educate in a new humanism of work, where man, and not profit, is at the centre; where the economy *serves* man rather than it being *served* by man.

Another aspect is important: education helps people not to believe in the deception of those who would like to convince them that work, one’s daily effort, the gift of oneself and one’s study do not

have value. I would add that today, in the world of work — and in every environment — it is essential to educate and follow the luminous and demanding path of honesty, avoiding the shortcuts of favouritism and recommendations. There is underlying corruption here. There are always these temptations, large or small, but it always pertains to “moral commerce”, which is unworthy of man: it must be rejected, by habituating the heart to remain free. Otherwise it creates a false and noxious mentality which must be fought: that of lawlessness, which leads to the corruption of people and of society. Lawlessness is like an octopus in hiding: it is concealed, submerged, but with its tentacles it seizes and poisons, polluting and doing so much harm. Educating is a great vocation: as St Joseph trained Jesus in the art of carpentry, you too are called to help the younger generations to discover the beauty of truly human work.

The second word I would like to impart to you is *sharing*. Work is not only a vocation of the individual person, but an opportunity to enter into relationships with others: “Underlying every form of work is a concept of the relationship which we can and must have with what is other than ourselves” (Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'*, n. 125). Work should unite people, not separate them, rendering them closed and distant. Occupying so many hours in the day, it also offers us the opportunity to share everyday life, to take an interest in those who are at our side, to receive the presence of others as a gift and a responsibility.

In his written testimony, Giovanni spoke of a form of sharing that is implemented in your Movement: “Civil Service Plans”, which enable you to approach people and new contexts, making their problems and hopes your own. It is important that others are not only beneficiaries of certain care, but of actual plans. Everyone makes plans for themselves, but planning for others enables us to take a step forward: placing intelligence at the service of love, rendering the person more whole and life more happy, because one is capable of giving.

The last word I would like to convey to you is *witness*. The Apostle Paul encouraged witnessing the faith also through activity, overcoming laziness and idleness. He gave a very strong and clear rule: “If any one will not work, let him not eat” (2 Thess 3:10). Even in that time there were those who made others work, in order to eat. Today, however, there are people who would like to work, but cannot do so, and struggle even to eat. You encounter so many young people who do not work. Truly, as you said, they are “the new excluded ones of our time”. Consider that youth unemployment has reached 40 per cent in some European countries, our Europe, 47 per cent in other countries, 50 per cent in others. What does a young person without work do? Where does he or she end up? In addiction, in psychological illness, in suicide. Youth suicide statistics are not always published. This is a tragedy: it is the tragedy of the new excluded ones of our time. They are deprived of their dignity. Human justice requires access to work for everyone. Divine mercy also challenges us: in facing people in difficulty and challenging situations — I think also of the young for whom getting married and having children is an issue, because they do not have a stable enough job or a house — preaching does not help; it is instead important to pass on hope, to comfort through presence, to support with real help.

I encourage you to bear witness starting from your personal lifestyle and that of the association: a witness of gratuitousness, of solidarity, of the spirit of service. When disciples of Christ are transparent in heart and sensitive in life, they bring the Lord's light to the places where they live and work. I wish you this, while I apologize for the delay: you have patience, don't you! But the [morning's] audiences were prolonged. I bless you all, your families, and your commitment. Please, do not forget to pray for me. Thank you.