



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO THE ITALIAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE DONATION OF ORGANS, TISSUES AND CELLS (AIDO)

Clementine Hall

Saturday, 13 April 2019 **[Multimedia]**

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

I am pleased to greet all of you, volunteers of the Italian Association of Organ Donors (aido), gathered here as representatives of thousands of people who have chosen to testify to and spread the values of sharing and donation, without asking anything in return. I cordially greet and thank your President, Dr Flavia Petrin, for the words with which she introduced this meeting.

Developments in transplant medicine have made it possible to donate organs after death, and in certain cases even while living (in the case of kidneys, for example), in order to save other human lives; to preserve, recover and even improve the health status of many sick people who have no other alternative. Organ donation responds to a social necessity because, notwithstanding the development of many medical treatments, the need for organs is still great. However, the significance of the donation for the donor, for the recipient and for society is never exhausted in its “utility”, as it relates to profound human experiences filled with love and altruism. Donation means looking and going beyond oneself, beyond individual needs, and generously opening oneself to a broader good. In this perspective, organ donation is proposed not only as an act of social responsibility, but as the expression of universal fraternity that binds all men and women.

In this regard, the Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that “organ donation after death is a noble and meritorious act and is to be encouraged as an expression of generous solidarity” (n. 2296). By virtue of the intrinsic relational dimension of the human being, each of us also fulfils him or herself through participation in the achievement of the good of others. Each subject represents a benefit not only for him or herself but for the whole of society; the significance of the commitment to the attainment of the good of one’s neighbour.

In the Encyclical Letter *Evangelium vitae*, John Paul II recalled that, among the acts that contribute to fostering an authentic culture of life, “a particularly praiseworthy example of such gestures is the donation of organs, performed in an ethically acceptable manner” — this should be emphasized — “with a view to offering a chance of health and even of life itself to the sick who sometimes have no other hope” (n. 86). For this reason it is important to maintain organ donation as a gratuitous, uncompensated act. Indeed, every form of commodification of the body or a part thereof is contrary to human dignity. In donating blood or a bodily organ, it is necessary to respect the ethical and religious perspective.

For those who do not have a religious faith, the gesture in favour of needy brothers and sisters should be performed on the basis of an ideal of impartial human solidarity. Believers are called to experience it as an offering to the Lord, who is identified with those suffering due to illness, traffic accidents or work-related injuries. It is beautiful, for disciples of Jesus, to offer their own organs, according to the terms permitted by law and by ethics, because it is a gift given to the suffering Lord, who said that everything we have done to a brother in need we have done to Him (cf. Mt 25:40).

Therefore, it is important to promote a culture of donation which, through information, awareness and your constant and appreciated commitment may favour this offering of a part of one’s body, without risk or disproportionate consequence, in living donation, and of all organs after one’s own death.

From our own death and from our gift the life and health of others, sick and suffering, may spring forth, helping to reinforce a culture of help, of giving, of hope and of life. In the face of the threats against life which, unfortunately, we must witness almost daily, as in the cases of abortion and euthanasia — to mention only the beginning and end of life — society needs these concrete gestures of solidarity and generous love, in order to ensure the understanding that life is something sacred.

I encourage you to continue in your efforts to defend and promote life, through the marvelous means of organ donation. I like to recall Jesus’ words: “give, and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over” — here the Lord spares no adjectives — “will be put into your lap” (Lk 6:38).

We will receive our compensation from God according to the sincere and concrete love that we have shown for our neighbour.

May the Lord support you in your beneficial intentions. For my part, I accompany you with my humanity and my blessing. Thank you.

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