



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO THE MEMBERS OF THE CHARLES DE FOUCAULD SPIRITUAL FAMILY ASSOCIATION

*Study of the Paul VI Hall
Wednesday, 18 May 2022*

[[Multimedia](#)]

Dear brothers and sisters,

Welcome! I am glad to meet you and to share with you the joy for the canonization of Brother Charles. In him we can see a prophet of our time, who knew how to bring to light the essentiality and universality of faith.

Essentiality, condensing the meaning of believing into two simple words, in which everything is contained: “Jesus — Caritas”; and above all, returning to the spirit of the origins, the spirit of Nazareth. I hope that you too, like Brother Charles, will continue to imagine Jesus who walks in the midst of the people, who patiently carries out laborious work, who lives in the daily life of a family and of a city. How happy the Lord is to see that he is imitated in the way of smallness, humility, sharing with the poor! Charles de Foucauld, in the silence of the hermit’s life, in worship and in service to his brothers, wrote that while “we are inclined to favour works, whose effects are visible and tangible, God gives first place to love and then to sacrifice inspired by love and to obedience derived from love” (Letter to Marie de Bondy, 20 May 1915). As a Church we need to *return to the essential*, to not get lost in so many secondary matters, at the risk of losing sight of the simple purity of the Gospel.

And then *universality*. The new Saint lived his Christian existence as a brother to all, starting from the smallest. His goal was not to convert others but to live God’s freely given love, putting into effect “the apostolate of goodness”. He wrote: “I want to accustom all Christians, Muslims, Jews

and idolaters to consider me as their brother, the universal brother” (Letter to Marie de Bondy, 7 January 1902). And to do this, he opened the doors of his house so that it might be “a port” for all, “the shelter of the Good Shepherd”. I thank you for carrying on this witness, which does so much good, especially at a time when there is a risk of closing oneself in particularisms, of increasing distances, of losing sight of one’s brother. We unfortunately see this in the news every day.

Brother Charles, in the hardships and poverty of the desert, remarked: “My soul is always in joy” (Letter to Fr. Huvelin, 1 February 1898). Dear sisters and brothers, may Our Lady grant you the ability to cherish and nourish the same joy, because joy is the clearest witness we can give to Jesus in every place and in every time.

And I would also like to thank Saint Charles de Foucauld because his spirituality did me so much good when I was studying theology, a time of maturation and also of crisis. It came to me through Fr Paoli and through the books of Voillaume which I read constantly. It helped me so much to overcome crises and to find a way of Christian life that was simpler, less Pelagian, closer to the Lord. I thank the Saint and bear witness to this, because it did me so much good.

I wish you a happy mission! I bless you and ask you, please, to continue to pray for me. Thank you!