



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO THE MEMBERS OF THE "SANT'ANGELA MERICI" FOUNDATION OF SYRACUSE**

*Clementine Hall
Saturday, 6 April 2024*

[Multimedia]

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

I am pleased to meet you and I thank you for being here, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Sant'Angela Merici Foundation of Syracuse which, continuing the inspiration and commitment of Msgr. Gozzo, daily places itself at the service of the most fragile people.

Your history, and everything you carry out generously in the various operational Centres, is rooted in that event that marked the city of Syracuse when, in 1953, a painting depicting Our Lady began to weep in the house of the Iannuso couple. They are the *tears of Mary*, our Mother, heavenly Mother, for the sufferings and sorrows of her children. Mary weeps for her children who suffer. They are tears that speak to us of God's compassion for us all. We must think about this: God's compassion. Indeed, He gave to all of us His Mother, who weeps our own tears so that we do not feel alone in difficult moments. At the same time, through the tears of the Blessed Virgin, the Lord wants to soften our hearts, which at times have dried up in indifference and hardened in selfishness; the Lord wants to make our consciences sensitive, so that we let ourselves be touched by the pain of our brothers and sisters and move us to compassion for them, committing ourselves to lift them up, lift them up, accompany them.

This is the richness of your history, these are the roots that you must not forget, and above all, this is the meaning of your work. Indeed, the Foundation, by carrying out daily work in which professionalism and the spirit of sacrifice are combined, exists to express in concrete gestures the tears wept by the Virgin Mary and, at the same time, her maternal desire to dry her children's

tears. And you, brothers and sisters, try to do just this: to wipe away the tears of those who suffer, to accompany those who are in pain, to stand beside the weakest in society, to take care of the most vulnerable, to welcome and accommodate those who live particular situations of fragility.

Brothers and sisters, the service you offer is valuable, and I would like to say this: *the source of your work is the Gospel, the source of your work is the Gospel*: stay attached to this source!

The Gospel is the source because Jesus was the first - let us not forget this – Jesus was the first to let Himself be touched to the core by the suffering of those He met and, as the evangelist John reminds us, “He was deeply moved” (*Jn 11:33*) by the death of His friend Lazarus. At the same time, you are a living witness to this Gospel, to Jesus’ compassion, when you strive to accompany those in pain, just as the Lord commanded His disciples to do when faced with the hungry, exhausted and oppressed crowds. For Jesus asks us never to separate love of God from love of neighbour, especially the poorest. Jesus reminds us that in the end we will be judged not on outward practices but on love – we will be judged on love – the love that, like oil of consolation, we will have been able to pour over the wounds of our brothers and sisters. He says: “As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me” (*Mt 25:40*).

Dear friends, I encourage you to continue on this journey of yours. And I ask for a grace for you, which is the most important of all: the grace to know how to be moved, the capacity to cry with those who cry. The indifference, the individualism that closes us off from the fate of those around us, and that anaesthesia of the heart that no longer moves us when faced with the dramas of daily life, these three things are the worst evils of our society. Please, do not be ashamed to weep, to feel emotion for those who suffer; do not spare yourselves in exercising compassion for those who are fragile, because Jesus is present in these people.

Go forth! And do not be discouraged; on the contrary, be thankful if your work remains hidden and demands a silent daily sacrifice: the good done to those who cannot reciprocate expands in a surprising and unexpected way, like a little seed hidden in the ground that sooner or later makes a new life germinate.

May Our Lady of Tears protect you, keep you and intercede for you. And, please, do not forget to pray for me.

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