



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER
TO THE DELEGATION FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF DENTISTRY
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NAPLES "FEDERICO II"**

*Consistory Hall
Friday, 29 November 2024*

[Multimedia]

*Your Excellency, Rector Magnificent, distinguished Professors,
Dear sisters, dear brothers, good morning!*

I am pleased to greet you on the occasion of an anniversary that honours you and, precisely for this reason, engages your responsibility: indeed, eight hundred years have passed since the founding of the University of Naples. This institution still bears the name of Frederick II, the Swabian emperor who established the first *studium generale* of the city of Naples, giving rise to one of the oldest universities in the world. The Neapolitans are good...

The anniversary you are celebrating invites you doctors, in particular, to remember the illustrious clinical tradition to which you are heirs. It is summarized well in the motto that combines the lesson of the Greek Hippocrates with the authority of the Latin Scribonio: *primum non nocere, secundum cavere, tertium sanare*. It is beautiful! First do no harm, then care, finally heal. A good programme that is timeless!

Do no harm: this instruction might seem superfluous, but instead it obeys a healthy realism: first and foremost, it is a matter of not adding harm and suffering to what the patient is already experiencing. In the sense of doing no harm.

Take care: this is the quintessential evangelical act, that of the good Samaritan, but must be done in the "style of God". What is God's style? Closeness, compassion and tenderness. Do not forget

this: God is close, compassionate and tender. God's style is always this: closeness, compassion and tenderness. Moreover, the person is cared for in their entirety, not just a part. I remember when, in my twenties, a part of my lung, which was diseased, was removed. Yes, they gave me medicine, but what gave me the most strength was the hand of the nurses who, after giving me the injections, took me by the hand... This human tenderness does a great deal of good! Take care.

Heal: in this you can resemble Jesus, who healed every sort of disease and infirmity among the people. May you be glad for the good done to those who are in suffering (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1421).

Dear friends, classical wisdom today encounters a rapidly developing technology, which must never proceed without deontology. Otherwise, if it neglects human dignity – which is the same for all! – medicine runs the risk of lending itself to the interests of the market and ideology, instead of devoting itself to the good of nascent life, of suffering life, of destitute life. The doctor exists to heal from evil: always cure! No life is to be discarded. “But this person won't make it...”. Accompany him or her to the very end.

I urge you to foster a science that is always at the service of the person. And I thank you for your skill, and I thank you for the constancy of your work: after eight hundred years, you continue to educate! Thank you!

I bless you from my heart. And please, do not forget to pray for me, thank you.

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