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Pope's Message to the participants in the "Manos Abiertas" National Meeting in Argentina

Pope Francis has sent a video message to the participants in the 14 th National Meeting of "Manos Abiertas", held in these days in Santa Fe, Argentina. Manos Abiertas is a Christian-inspired voluntary organisation founded in 1992 in Villa de Mayo, near Buenos Aires, by the Jesuit Father Angel Rossi, with the aim of "loving and serving". The theme of this year's meeting is "Mercy, a voyage of the heart to the hands". The following is the full text of the Holy Father's message:

"You are gathered for this National Meeting on the theme 'Mercy, a voyage of the heart to the hands'. Let us take two passages from the Gospel. When the Good Samaritan encounters that man on the road, the Gospel tells us that he felt compassion in his heart, and then got off his horse, touched him, and healed him; the compassion of the heart lead him to work with his hands. Another scene of the Gospel tells us about Jesus at the gate of the city of Nain, watching the funeral procession of the young son of the widow, and the mother behind. 'He had compassion for her and said to her, "Do not weep"', and his hands began to act. After he touched the bier and said, 'Young man, I say to you, rise!'. A journey of the heart to the hand. This is how Jesus is; this is what the Gospel teaches us: to act, but from the heart".

"The heart, be it that of the Good Samaritan or that of Jesus, was touched by misery: the misery it saw there, the misery of the widow mother who Jesus say, the misery of sorry, the misery of the beaten man the Samaritan saw. The heart joins with the misery of the other, and this is mercy. When the misery of the other enters into my heart I feel mercy, which is not the same as feeling pity, pity is another sentiment. I can feel pity before an injured animal or a situation, but mercy is another sentiment: it is when the mercy of another, or a situation of suffering or misery, is placed in the heart and I let this situation touch my heart. I would say: it is the outbound journey, the voyage of misery to the heart. And this is the path: there is no mercy if it does not come from the heart, a heart wounded by the suffering of another, by a painful situation of another, a heart that lets itself be wounded".

"It is different to have good sentiments. This is not mercy, they are good sentiments. It is different to perform acts of philanthropy with the hands, this is not mercy. It is good, it is good, it is good, it is not bad to perform philanthropy, but it is not mercy, it is something else. Mercy is that outbound trip of misery to my heart, borne by my heart, that moves my heart and that, at times, moves it to the point that the heart becomes like a compass at the North Pole, that is unable to stop, for what it feels".

“Some of you might ask me, ‘Father, how does one feel mercy and not pity?’ Well, first we need to ask for the grace to have mercy. It is a grace and you must ask the Lord for it. The only road, though, to have mercy is through one’s own sin recognised by ourselves, and forgiven by the Lord; through sin acknowledged and forgiven. We can be merciful only if we feel we have truly received the mercy of the Lord, as otherwise one cannot be truly merciful. If you feel that your sin has been taken on, forgiven, and forgotten by God, you have received mercy, and by having thus received mercy, you can be merciful. If mercy does not come from your heart in this way, it is not mercy”.

“And here begins the return journey. If the outbound journey is letting my heart be wounded by the suffering of others, the trip through my heart is recognising my sin, my suffering, my lowliness and feeling I have been forgiven and have received the Lord’s mercy, then the return journey begins, from the heart to the hands. In this way the journey goes from my misery that has received mercy, to the suffering of the other; from my misery loved by God, to love for the misery of another; from my misery loved in my heart to the expression of my hands. And this is mercy. Mercy is a journey from the heart to the hands. ‘What do I do? Open my hands or my heart?’ Both. Let misery wound your heart, that of others and your own. Let yourself receive mercy and begin your return journey, and with your hands give mercy to others, spreading mercy and love”.

“God bless you and may your meeting be fruitful for all the community of ‘Manos Abiertas’. And please, do not forget to pray for me”.
