



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE  
**BOLLETTINO**

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### **Audience with members of the National Union for Persons Injured in Service**

This morning the Holy Father Francis received in audience, in the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the members of the National Union for Persons Injured in Service, to whom he delivered the following address:

#### **Address of the Holy Father**

Dear friends, good morning and welcome!

I thank the president for his words, especially for having assured me, on behalf of you all, of support in prayer. Truly, I need it, this job is not easy! Thank you for your prayer. It is the most beautiful gift you could give me. But I thank you from my heart also for the gift of the Crucifix you had made for the occasion, with the image of the Good Shepherd. In this way it is as though your prayers were condensed in that sculpture.

I would like to share with you two simple thoughts, that are suggested to me by the particular identity of your association.

The first is that you, like other similar bodies – and in Italy, thanks to God, there are many – with this Union you undertake to give a social meaning to what has been, individually, a negative experience, a limitation suffered in circumstances that are different for each one of you. This is an aspect of great moral and spiritual value. Each person is invited to overcome the tendency to close up in oneself, in one's own condition, to open up to encounter, to sharing, to solidarity. And this can generate a great change, as you are well aware. The limit, the burden of bearing it, remains as such, it does not disappear, but it receives a different meaning, a positive meaning: in front of your condition, instead of placing a “minus” sign, you place a “plus”. And it is possible to do this together, because you support each other.

This transformation from negative to positive is one of the essential aspects of the mystery of Jesus Christ. I can only hint at this, but I hope you will have the opportunity to explore it in some of your meetings. In short, Jesus, with the strength of God's love, transformed evil into goodness, but not in an abstract sense, in theory, but in

himself, in his personal experience, in his own flesh. He transformed the evil he had to suffer, which culminated in the passion and death on the cross, into sacrifice and salvation for us. He did so thanks to the love of his Father, rich in infinite mercy. Jesus made this mystery tangible in the Eucharist, when, knowing what awaited him, namely the cross, he gave thanks to the Father over the bread and the wine, and left to his disciples the sacrament of his sacrifice. In this way he transformed evil into goodness, hatred into love, violence into healing. As I was saying to you, it is just a hint, but it deserves to be explored both personally and together.

The second reflection, connected to this, was suggested to me by your commitment to peace. I know that for some of you the cause of your disability is linked indeed to a peace mission, or the fulfilment of service to law and public order. And this, so to speak, enriches the moral patrimony of your association. But the commitment to being peacemakers applies to everyone, regardless of each person's history. Here too we are met by the word of the Lord Jesus, who proclaims: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God" (*Mt* 5:9). Faced with a war that seems to be an invincible monster, what can we do, beyond prayer? We can try, in daily life, to face conflicts avoiding any form of violence and oppression, even verbal. And it is not easy! Because at times it takes a word to hurt or kill a brother or a sister. Think of slander, think of gossip, which is a common, everyday thing, yet it does so much harm, it destroys. So, the association can and must become a force for peace in society, helping to resolve conflicts peacefully, seeking the common good and drawing attention to those who are least protected.

Dear friends, I thank you for your visit and encourage you to continue on your associative journey. May the Lord give you the strength to help many people to put a "plus" sign in front of their plight. I bless you, I bless your families. And I ask you, please, not to forget to pray for me. Thank you!

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