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BOLLETTINO

HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIÈGE PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHL
OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE SALA DE IMPRENSA DA SANTA SÉ
BIURO PRASOWE STOLICY APOSTOLSKIEJ دار الصحافة التابعة للكرسي الرسولي

N. 230708b

Saturday 08.07.2023

Letter of the Holy Father on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of his visit to Lampedusa

The following is the Letter sent by the Holy Father Francis to Archbishop Alessandro Damiano of Agrigento, on the occasion of the celebration to commemorate the tenth anniversary of his visit to Lampedusa:

Letter of the Holy Father

Dear brother

Archbishop Alessandro Damiano of Agrigento

On the occasion of the commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the visit to Lampedusa, I wish to send to you, the faithful of the archdiocese, the authorities and those present my cordial greeting. I am close to you with affection, prayer and encouragement.

Dear friends, in these days in which we are witnessing the repetition of grave tragedies in the Mediterranean, we are shocked by the silent massacres before which we still remain helpless and stunned. The death of innocents, mainly children, in search of a more serene existence, far from wars and violence, is a painful and deafening cry that cannot leave us indifferent. It is the shame of a society that no longer knows how to mourn and pity others.

Ten years have passed since the journey I wished to make in the community of Lampedusa to express my support and paternal closeness to those who, after painful ordeals, at the mercy of the sea, landed on your shores. The occurrence of such inhuman disasters must utterly shake our consciences; God still asks us: "Adam, where are you? Where is your brother?" Do we want to persevere in error, to pretend to put ourselves in the place of the Creator, to dominate in order to protect our own interests, to break the constitutive harmony between Him and us? We must change our attitude; the brother who knocks at the door deserves love, hospitality and every care. He is a brother who, like me, has been placed on earth to enjoy what exists there and to share it in communion.

In such a context, we are all called to a renewed and profound sense of responsibility, showing solidarity and sharing. It is therefore necessary for the Church, in order to be truly prophetic, to make a diligent effort to set out on the paths of the forgotten, coming out of herself, soothing with the balm of fraternity and charity the bleeding sores of those who bear the same wounds of Christ imprinted on their own bodies.

I therefore urge you not to remain imprisoned by fear and partisan logic, but to be Christians capable of replenishing this island, placed in the heart of *Mare Nostrum*, with the spiritual richness of the Gospel, so that it may once again shine in its original beauty.

As I thank each one of you, radiant and merciful face of the Father, for your commitment to assist migrants, I entrust to the Lord of life those who have died in the crossings, and gladly impart my Blessing, asking you to please pray for me.

Rome, from Saint John Lateran, 20 June 2023

FRANCIS
