



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE BOLLETTINO

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Audience with the Group of the Little House of Mercy of Gela, Caltanissetta

This morning the Holy Father Francis received in audience, in the Vatican Apostolic Palace, a group from the Little House of Mercy Association of Gela, Caltanissetta, to whom he addressed the following greeting:

Greeting of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters, welcome!

I am pleased to meet you on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Apostolic Fraternity of Mercy and the tenth of the Little House of Mercy of Gela. I greet Bishop Rosario Gisana of Piazza Armerina: he is good, this bishop, good. He was persecuted, slandered, yet he stood firm, always, just, a just man. Therefore, that day I went to Palermo, I wanted to stop first at Piazza Armerina, to greet him; he is a good bishop. I greet the priests and deacons present, the Sisters of Mary Immaculate, the members of the Fraternity and the “Raphael” cooperative, the volunteers and the people welcomed, young and faithful. And also the father [Pasqualino] di Dio... Who is he, Father di Dio? ... Thank God you are not called “*del diavolo*”, of the devil!

You have come here as a big family, in which each person has different and complementary gifts and tasks; and this rich variety speaks for itself about the journey through which, over these years, you have developed a well-structured and concrete project. Starting from situations of hardship, you have sought to embrace all people and the whole person in charity, addressing multiple needs and promoting various initiatives: from the daily soup kitchen to craft workshops, from school remedial services to spaces of dialogue for families in difficulty. You can see that there is movement there, and that is good; you can see that you have allowed yourselves to be provoked and disturbed by the needs of the brothers and sisters that God has placed on your path, especially the last, those most in need: they are many! Faced with them, you have not “passed on by”, but have stopped, becoming close and taking care of them (cf. *Lk 10:25-37*), with creativity, courage and generosity, like the Good Samaritan who did not pass on by, and this is beautiful.

I encourage you to continue this. And at the same time, I also want to invite you to cultivate and strengthen

further the foundation that ever since the beginning has given solidity and strength to all your work: the spirituality of *Mercy* and of the *One Bread*. It wants you to be humble disciples of the Eucharistic Christ and to reveal with Him the face of the Father (cf. *Jn 14:8*), just as Saint John Paul II recommended, by whose teachings you are inspired (cf. Encyclical Letter *Dives in Misericordia*, 1). Reveal, in service and in the gift of yourselves, the tenderness of the Father's face: dear brothers and sisters, in the many occupations in which you spend yourselves every day, never forget that this is the ultimate meaning of your actions and your primary vocation. Imitate God who is close, compassionate and tender; be also close to people, compassionate and tender. We need tenderness in the Church.

Do everything with one desire: that the people who meet you come to know Him. Try, in doing good, to disappear, with humility, so that in what you do, the Lord alone appears and everyone comes to Him. Saint Faustina Kowalska, another inspirer of your work, used to say that a humble soul influences the fate of the whole world (cf. *Diary*, IV notebook, 29.9.37), and this is because humility makes one close to God and to one's brothers and sisters, capable of a delicate, discreet and silent charity that makes giving noble, receiving easy and sharing natural.

Therefore, always have a reserved and gentle manner towards the people the Lord entrusts to you, and a style of discretion, like those parents, or friends, or brothers and sisters whose presence, where there is need, is so spontaneous and "normal" as to go almost unnoticed. To be there without being seen: this is not easy, this too is holiness. After all, this is how God loves us: with humble magnanimity, moment by moment, giving us everything without expecting anything in return!

Here, then, are two important attitudes with which I encourage you to continue on your journey: a *holy creative restlessness* - like children, always restless - and a great deal of *humility*, to be ready and concrete in responding to the needs of your brothers and sisters and, at the same time, to bring everyone to a personal encounter with the merciful face of the Father. Keep up the good work! And please, do not forget to pray for me. Thank you!
