



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE **BOLLETTINO**

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BIURO PRASOWE STOLICY APOSTOLSKIEJ دار الصحافة التابعة للكرسي الرسولي

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Audience with the Association of Hispanic Priests in the United States of America

This morning, in the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the participants in the annual conference of Hispanic Priests working in the United States of America, to whom he delivered the following address:

Address of the Holy Father

Dear brothers,

Thank you for coming here: this is the house of Peter, it is your house, because the Church is a house with open doors, to which all come from east to west to sit at the table the Lord has prepared for us (cf. *Mt* 8:11). And when we want to make the Church refined, it is a house with closed doors, and this is not good. Beware of ecclesiastical refinement. I have carefully read the questions you have sent me - they are many - and as I thought about how I could answer them, I remembered the words the Lord said to Saint Teresa of Jesus when they took away the books she trusted: "I will give you a living book", Christ is the book I highly recommend. But we must seek Him, in Scripture and the Gospel, in silent adoration, because we have lost the sense of adoration a little; we must find the Lord in the silence of adoration. If I were to ask now - I will not ask this so as not to make anyone blush - but if I were to ask now how many hours you spend in worship each week, that would be a good test. I will throw the question out there but everyone can answer within themselves. No, because it is too much effort, because here, because there. If you don't pray, if you don't worship, your life is worth little.

In the United States, a National Eucharistic Congress is being prepared for next year, and Blessed Carlo Acutis and Saint Manuel González have been chosen as its patrons, both of whom excelled - like so many saints of the Church - in the art of reading this living book, before the Tabernacle, in the silent, kneeling school. And it is precisely from the catecheses of Saint Manuel that I would like to take a key to answering the questions you have posed. On one occasion, Saint Manuel addressed a group of the faithful, reflecting on the role of the holy women on Calvary, as models for every disciple before the Lord's cross, then as now. They are a model. The same helplessness, the same desire to act against injustice that the holy women experienced in those moments,

we can experience in the face of the problems of immigrants, the closure of certain civil and religious authorities, the challenges of interculturality, the complexity of proclamation: so many things.

Faced with these difficulties, the saint warns us that “Jesus does not stop suffering”. Jesus says that He will stand on Calvary until the end of time, even though He is risen, He continues to stand on Calvary in the person of his brothers and sisters. In every tabernacle, in every consecrated chalice, we see the cross standing, and He asks us: “Can we do something to relieve the suffering Christ today? Do it, do it as soon as possible”, but do it knowing that “the Passion will be the companion of the Jesus of your Tabernacles” in every suffering brother and sister, and what God asks of you is not to leave them alone. Do not leave those who suffer alone, do not leave the Lord of the Tabernacle alone, convince yourselves that you cannot do anything with your hands if you do not do it with your knees. Adoration, Eucharistic silence and intercession before the Tabernacle. And then yes, service. But it is like ping-pong, one thing leads to another, one thing leads to another.

Jesus, Saint Manuel tells us, does not demand of us that we prevent the Passion, but that we give Him glory in the midst of it. In this I ask you please: beware of settling down, do not settle, do not make yourselves comfortable. Sometimes the modern world leads us to schedules: “Father, can you hear my confession?” “No, the timetable is from such and such an hour”. Please, first the people, then the timetable. Don't become “employees” of the sacred. That is the danger of this culture. Review your dedication to people, your openness of heart.

Inspired by these saints, I leave it to the Lord in the Tabernacle to answer your concerns. Some answers will perhaps seem naive to you, like the efforts of the young Carlo Acutis to spread something that for him was an exceptional discovery, “a highway to heaven”. Others will seem greater than you, like continuing the social and apostolic works that Saint Manuel promoted. In fact, this pastor, in his recommendations, stated that, above all else, what a priest can do today begins with simple prayer, a close word, fraternal acceptance and persevering work. Prayer, simple, close word, fraternal welcome and persevering work. Do not spare yourselves! A priest from a poor, working-class neighbourhood, used to say he sometimes felt like closing the window. Because people used to go and ask him for things at any hour, or go and ask for blessings, anything. Because people are very inopportune, like the Lord, who is inopportune. And the priest told me: “When they see the door closed, they knock on the window, so I have to shut the window”. No, open the door! This is fundamental: priests for the people. And here I want to mention one thing. Do not have dirty nails, have clean nails, because nails get dirty when the priest starts to climb. And you climb for that post, for that parish, for that canonry, and then human promotion surpasses the gratitude of proclamation. And if you lose this, you will become poor priests who have lost the joy of their lives. Always return to Jesus' call to serve, at the disposal of others. Do not have dirty nails from climbing, because afterwards, when one reaches the top, what one sees is quite indecent, I do not want to say.

Brothers, do not put your trust only in big ideas, nor in well-designed pastoral proposals. People scare me when they come with all those pastoral programmes. For others to implement them, “not me”. Do not look for culprits. “It was so-and-so's fault that it didn't work”. First of all, ask, “What did I do?”. Look within yourself to see the blame; that is pastoral humility. Surrender yourselves to the One who has called you to give yourselves, and only asks you for fidelity and constancy, with the certainty that it will be He who will complete the work and make your efforts bear good fruit. And let us hope that you sow much, and let us hope that you do not have to take sleeping pills because you are so tired by the evening. Let us hope! Thank you.
