



The Holy See

PASTORAL VISIT TO TURIN

MEETING WITH THE SICK

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

*Church of the Little House of Divine Providence - Cottolengo
Fifth Sunday of Easter, 2 May 2010*

(Video)

*Your Eminences,
Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

I would like to express to all of you my joy and gratitude to the Lord who has brought me here to you, to this place where the love and Providence of the heavenly Father are expressed in so many ways and in accordance with a special charism. Our meeting is one which is in harmony with my Pilgrimage to the Holy Shroud, in it not only can we interpret the whole drama of suffering but also, in the light of Christ's Resurrection, its full meaning for the world's redemption. I thank Fr Aldo Sarotto for his meaningful words to me: through him I extend my thanks to all who work in this place, the Little House of Divine Providence, as St Joseph Benedict Cottolengo chose to call it. I greet with gratitude the three religious families born from Cottolengo's heart and from the "imagination" of the Holy Spirit. Thanks to all of you, dear sick people, who are the precious treasure of this house and of this Institution.

As you may know, at the General Audience last Wednesday, together with the figure of St Leonard Murialdo, I also presented your Founder's charism and work. Yes, he was a true and proper champion of charity whose initiatives, like flourishing trees, stand before our eyes and before the gaze of the world. In re-reading the testimonies of that time, we note that it was far from easy for Cottolengo to begin his undertaking. The many activities of social assistance that existed for the neediest in the area did not suffice to heal the scourge of poverty that afflicted the city of Turin. St

Cottolengo sought to respond to this situation by taking in people in difficulty and giving priority to those who were not accepted and cared for by others. The first nucleus of the House of Divine Providence experienced hardship and did not last long. In 1832, a new structure in the Valdocco district to which several religious families also gave a helping hand came into being.

In spite of going through dramatic moments in his life, St Cottolengo always kept his serene trust in the face of events; attentive to perceiving the signs of God's fatherhood, he recognized his presence and his mercy in every situation and, in the poor, the most lovable image of his greatness. He was guided by a deep conviction: "The poor are Jesus" he used to say, "they are not just an image of him. They are Jesus in person and must be served as such. All the poor are our masters, but these who look so repulsive to the physical eye are even more particularly our masters, they are our true jewels. If we do not treat them well, let them chase us out of the Little House. They are Jesus". Motivated in the depths of his heart by the Apostle Paul's words: *the love of Christ impels us* (cf. 2 Cor 5: 14), St Joseph Benedict Cottolengo felt he should work both for God and for man. He wanted to express this in unreserved dedication to the service of the smallest and the most forsaken. From the outset, a fundamental principle of his work was the exercise of Christian charity for all. This permitted him to recognize great dignity in every person, even those on the fringes of society. Cottolengo had understood that those hit by suffering and rejection tend to withdraw and isolate themselves and to express distrust of life itself. Thus, for our Saint, taking on the burden of so much human suffering meant creating relations of affective, family and spontaneous closeness by opening establishments that would favour this closeness in that family style which still endures today.

For St Joseph Benedict Cottolengo, the recovery of personal dignity meant re-establishing and appreciating the whole human being: from his fundamental psychological, social needs to his moral and spiritual needs, from the rehabilitation of his physical functions to the search for a meaning to life, bringing the person to feel that he/she was still a living part of the ecclesial community and of the ecclesial fabric. We are grateful to this great apostle of charity because in visiting these places, in encountering the daily suffering in the faces and limbs of so many of our brothers and sisters, accepted here as in their own homes, we may experience the deepest value and meaning of suffering and pain.

Dear sick people, you are carrying out an important activity: by living your suffering in union with the Crucified and Risen Christ, you share in the mystery of his suffering for the world's salvation. By offering our pain to God through Christ, we can collaborate in the victory of good over evil, because God makes our offering, our act of love fruitful. Dear brothers and sisters, all of you who are here, may each one for his own part: do not feel irrelevant to the world's future but rather feel that you are precious pieces of a most beautiful mosaic that God, like a great artist, continues to create day by day, also with your contribution. Christ, who died on the Cross to save us, let himself be nailed to it so that life in its full splendour might blossom from that wood, from that sign of death. This house is one of the ripe fruits that the Cross and Resurrection of Christ have produced

and shows that suffering, evil and death do not have the last word, for life can be reborn from death and suffering. One of you, whom I wish to remember witnessed to this in an exemplary way: Venerable Bro. Luigi Bordino, a marvellous religious who was also a nurse.

In this place, then, we understand better that since the human passion was taken on by Christ in his Passion, nothing will be lost. The message of this solemn Exposition of the Holy Shroud: *Passio Christi - Passio hominis*, may be understood here in a special way. Let us pray the Crucified and Risen Lord that he may illumine our daily pilgrimage with the light of his Face: may he illumine our lives, the present and the future, the anguish and the joy and the struggles and the hopes of all of humanity. I cordially impart my Blessing to you all, dear brothers and sisters, as I invoke the intercession of the Virgin Mary and St Joseph Benedict Cottolengo: may it comfort and console you in trials and obtain for you every grace that comes from God, the author and giver of every perfect gift. Thank you!

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