



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO PILGRIMS FROM THE DIOCESE OF ISERNIA-VENAFRO

*Paul VI Audience Hall
Saturday, 2 May 2015*

[Multimedia]

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Good morning to you all! From the moment I entered I saw your joy; you are joyful, you are joyful! Now I understand bit better why Pope Celestine, who did not feel at home in Rome, returned to you.... Because of your joy!

Thank you for this great pilgrimage which you organized following the [pastoral visit I made to your diocese last 5 July](#).

Once again I want to manifest my gratitude for your welcome and cordially greet your bishop, Bishop Camillo Cibotti. Last year he had begun his service as bishop in Isernia and now he has learned a little bit! I greet the priests, men and women religious and faithful laypeople who serve the Gospel. And a respectful greeting goes to the authorities, who desired to be present here.

The festive atmosphere of this meeting cannot allow us to overlook the many and serious problems which still afflict your land, to which I referred previously during my visit to the city of Isernia, and to which the Bishop has now also referred. I am thinking especially of the chronic problem of *unemployment*, which especially effects the younger generations, who increasingly journey to other countries. I am also thinking of the lack of *adequate services* for the real needs of people — especially the elderly, sick and disabled — and of families. In the face of this troubling situation, it is necessary to mobilize people to join forces: to unite the institutions, private entrepreneurs and the various realities of civil society. You cannot delay taking the practical steps to create new jobs, thus providing especially to young people, the opportunity to realize oneself through honest work. You must take initiatives for young people, jobs, small things because, as you know, work gives dignity. Think about when a young person cannot find work, they don't have

a sense of dignity and they suffer. I encourage you to search, to pray, to seek small things, small things especially for young people.

As the Bishop pointed out earlier, your diocese is experiencing the need for new missionary enthusiasm which understands how to go beyond the static religious mentality. The *Jubilee Year of Celestine* — which you are celebrating — offers your communities the opportunity to return to Christ, to the Gospel in order to reconcile yourselves to God and to your neighbour. Reconciliation is beautiful, to have a peaceful soul: a peaceful family, a peaceful neighbourhood... and if we move forward with this commitment. God will work this grace.

Thus we have the rebirth of the desire to bring His love to all, especially those who are lonely, marginalized, humiliated by suffering, by social injustice, to those who, weary of other's words, feel a deep longing for God. Your diocesan jubilee is preparing you to live even better the *Extraordinary Holy Year of Mercy*, which I recently announced. May these intense times elicit a vigorous missionary enthusiasm especially in parishes, where ecclesial communion finds its immediate and visible expression. Every parish community is called to be a privileged place of listening and of proclaiming the Gospel; a house of prayer around the Eucharist; a true school of communion where the ardour of charity prevails over the temptation of a superficial and arid sense of religion.

When difficulties seem to blur the prospect for a better future, when you experience failure and emptiness, it is time for *Christian hope*, founded on the Risen Lord and accompanied by a strong charitable effort *for those most in need*. Then your diocesan path — already commendably oriented in this way of charity — will start to involve more people and more social and institutional realities in standing next to those who are without a home or work, as well as those who are afflicted by old or new hardship, not only providing for their urgent needs, but together with them in order to build a more welcoming, more respectful of diversity, more just and supportive society.

“How beautiful it is to be able to face life's ups and downs in Jesus' company, to have his Person and his message with us!”. This was my invitation last year to the youth of Abruzzo and Molise so that they may go forward with courage, overcome the challenges of the present moment, supporting and helping each other. To the young people and to all of you today I repeat: solve problems with solidarity. I therefore encourage you to witnesses to solidarity in your cities and towns, at work, at school, in the family and at meeting places.

May the Virgin Mary make you attentive to the Word of God, may she transform you into humble, credible and effective apostles of the Gospel and may she support you in your good intentions. To her and to the saints, who have adorned the journey of faith of your people, I entrust everyone, especially the little ones, the poor and the sick to her care. Sustained by such powerful intercessors, look without fear and with hope to your future and your land. With these vows, I impart to everyone a special blessing from my heart. And please, do not forget to pray for me,

because I too need it.

Let us pray together to Our Lady. [Hail Mary...]

And now I would like to hear a bit of singing!

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