



The Holy See

GREETING OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO PARTICIPANTS IN STUDY DAY ON SIBLINGS WITH DISABILITIES

It is with great pleasure that I welcome this beautiful initiative: a study day dedicated to the theme of “siblings”. I admit that I did not know this word, but I am well aware of the phenomenon it signifies. A reality which reminds us that, in good and bad, no person is alone, but always lives within a network of relationships. In good times, benefiting from the closeness, help and comfort of others; in bad times because one person’s problem reverberates in others, becoming a cause for worry and affliction. Disability develops its effects above all in the domestic sphere, in the family. The healthy brother or sister of a disabled brother or sister finds that he or she is like Simon from Cyrene, whom the guards forced to carry Jesus’ cross for a long stretch of the *via dolorosa*. A sibling is a person whom life has forced to be a Cyrenian. The stretch walked by this “Cyrenian brother” can be more or less long, but the framework is already determined from the start: he will have to share and carry the other’s cross, the cross of his own brother or sister in whom Jesus is hidden.

I have seen in the programme that there will be a presentation that, already in its title, cites the passage from the Letter to the Hebrews (2:11) referring precisely to Jesus who “is not ashamed to call them brethren”. I am happy with this reference because that is precisely the way it is: Jesus is not ashamed, he doesn’t worry; our problems become his. Jesus loves us just as we are, with our talents and with our frailties and disabilities. Jesus is happy because we are, not because we are one way instead of another, in good or terrible shape. We too, when we love, do not do so because of what the other has or knows or can do, but because of what the other is. This is what love is: wanting the other to be; to be as he is, not the way we think he should be according to much too specific standards. Love does not produce throwaways.

It is a widespread, harsh, dramatic situation for those who live in this context: siblings in situations of domestic or family disability. It is right and urgent that it be made the focus of study days like this one today, which sees people with different cultures and approaches meet, as well as the active participation of some siblings who will offer their direct, concrete experience in the form of

testimonies.

Thus, applauding the creators and organisers, I express my wish for good and fruitful work, in the hope that today's event will be a seed capable of bearing much fruit.

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