



The Holy See

MEETING WITH THE ST EGIDIO COMMUNITY TO MARK THE
50th ANNIVERSARY OF ITS FOUNDATION

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

Basilica of Santa Maria in Trastevere

Sunday, 11 March 2018

[Multimedia]

Dear Friends,

Thank you for your welcome! I am pleased to be here with you for the 50th anniversary of the Community of Sant'Egidio. From this Basilica of Santa Maria in Trastevere, the heart of your daily prayer, I wish to embrace your communities scattered across the world.

I greet you all, in particular, Prof. Andrea Riccardi, who had the inspired intuition to set out on this journey, and the President, Prof. Marco Impagliazzo, for his words of welcome.

You did not wish to make this festivity merely a celebration of the past, but also and above all, a joyous manifestation of responsibility in the future. This makes us think of the Gospel parable of the talents, which speaks of a man who, “going on a journey, called his servants and entrusted to them his property” (*Mt 25:14*). To each of you too, whatever your age, is given at least one talent. Upon it is inscribed the charism of this Community, a charism which, when I came here in 2014, I summed up in these words: *prayer, the poor, and peace*. The three “Ps”. And I added: “as you walk this path, you help compassion grow in the heart of society — which is the true revolution, that of compassion and tenderness, which rises from the heart — to cultivate friendship in place of the ghosts of animosity and indifference”. (*Meeting with the Community of Sant'Egidio*, 15 June 2014: ore, 20 June 2014, p.9).

Prayer, the poor and peace are the talents of the Community, ripened over 50 years. You receive

them once again today with joy. In the parable, however, a servant hides the talent in a hole and justifies himself thus: “I was afraid and went and hid your talent in the ground” (v. 25). This man did not know how to invest his talent in the future, because he allowed himself to be guided by fear.

The world today is often inhabited by *fear* — also by anger which is the sister of fear, as Professor Riccardi said. It is an ancient disease: in the Bible the invitation not to be afraid is often repeated. Our age is marked by great fear in the face of the vast scale of globalization. And fears often focus on those who are foreigners, different from us, poor, as if they were an enemy. Nations’ development plans are also driven by opposition to these people. And thus we defend ourselves from these people, believing we are preserving what we have or what we are. The atmosphere of fear can also infect Christians who, like that servant in the parable, hide the gift they have received: they do not invest it in the future; they do not share it with others, but they keep it for themselves: “I belong to such association... ; I am from that community...”; they “camouflage” their life this way and do not allow the talent to flourish.

If we are alone, we are easily seized by fear. But your journey leads you to look toward the future together: not alone, not by yourself. *Together with the Church*. You have benefited from the great impulse to share community life and to be the People of God that came from the [Second Vatican Council](#), which states: “God, however, does not make men holy and save them merely as individuals, without bond or link between one another. Rather has it pleased Him to bring men together as one people” (Dogmatic Constitution [Lumen Gentium](#), 9). Your Community, born in the late 1960s, is the daughter of the Council, its message and its spirit.

The future of the world seems uncertain, as we hear every day in the news. See how many wars are being waged! I know that you pray and work *for peace*. Let us think about the suffering of the Syrian people, the beloved and tortured Syrian people, whose refugees you have welcomed to Europe through “humanitarian corridors”. How is it possible that, after the tragedies of the 20th century, we can still fall back into the same absurd logic? But the Word of the Lord is light in the darkness and offers hope for peace; it helps us not to be afraid even before the force of evil.

You have written the words of the Psalm: “Thy word is lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (119[118]:105). We have welcomed *the Word of God* among us with a spirit of celebration. In this spirit you have welcomed what I wished to propose to each community at the conclusion of the Jubilee of Mercy: that one Sunday each year be dedicated to the Word of God (cf. Apostolic Letter [Misericordia et misera](#), 7). In the past, the Word of God has protected you from the temptations of ideology, and today it frees you from the intimidation of fear. That is why I urge you to love and turn evermore to the Bible. Everyone will find in it the source of mercy toward the poor, those wounded by life and by war.

The Word of God is the lamp with which to look to the future, also that of this Community. In its

light, one can read the signs of the times. Blessed Paul VI said: “The discovery of ‘the signs of the times’ ... comes from a comparison of faith with life”, so that “the world for us becomes a book” (*General Audience*, 16 April 1969: ore, 24 April 1969, p. 12). A book to read with the gaze and heart of God. This is the spirituality that sprung from the Council, which teaches great and attentive compassion for the world.

Since your Community was born, the world has become “global”: the economy and communications are, so to speak, “unified”. But for many people, especially the poor, new walls have been built. Diversity is an opportunity for hostility and conflict; a *globalization of solidarity and of the Spirit* is yet to be built. The future of the global world is to live together: this ideal requires a commitment to build bridges, maintain open dialogue, and to continue to encounter one another.

It is not just a political or organizational fact. Each one is called to change his or her heart by turning *a merciful gaze* upon the other, to become an artisan of peace and a prophet of mercy. The Samaritan in the parable took care of the dying man on the road because he “saw and had compassion” (Lk 10:33). The Samaritan had no specific responsibility towards the wounded man, and was a foreigner. Instead he behaved like a brother, because he had a merciful gaze. A Christian, by vocation, is the brother and sister of every person, especially if he or she is poor, even if an enemy. Never say, “What do I have to do with him or her”? Just a nice way of washing one’s hands! “What have I to do with him”? A merciful gaze commits us to the creative boldness of love; there is so much need of it! We are everyone’s brothers and sisters and, for this reason, prophets of a new world; and the Church is a sign of unity of the human race, among people, families, cultures.

I would like this anniversary to be a Christian anniversary: not a time to measure results or difficulties; not the hour for accounting, but the time when faith is called to become *newly bold for the Gospel*. Boldness is not one day’s courage, but the patience of a daily mission in the city and in the world. The mission is to patiently mend the human fabric of the peripheries, which violence and impoverishment have torn apart; to communicate the Gospel through personal friendship; to show how a life becomes truly human when it is lived alongside the poorest; to create a society in which no one is a stranger any longer. The mission is to cross borders and walls to reunite.

Today, may you continue ever more boldly along this path. Continue to be close to the children of the peripheries with the Schools of Peace which I visited; continue to accompany the elderly: sometimes they are discarded, but to you they are friends. Continue to open humanitarian corridors for refugees from war and hunger. The poor are your treasure!

The Apostle Paul writes: “let no one boast of men, for all things are yours ... and you are Christ’s; and Christ is God’s” (1 Cor 3:21, 23). You are Christ’s! This is the profound meaning of your history to date, but it is above all the key to facing the future. Always be Christ’s in prayer, in caring for the least of his brothers and sisters, searching for peace, because he is our peace. he will walk

with you, protect you and guide you! I pray for you, and you pray for me. Thank you.

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