



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE WORLD SEMINAR FOR CATHOLIC CIVIL AVIATION CHAPLAINS
SPONSORED BY THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE PASTORAL CARE OF MIGRANTS
AND ITINERANT PEOPLE**

*Clementine Hall
Friday, 12 June 2015*

[Multimedia]

Your Eminence, Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I welcome you at the conclusion of the International Seminar of Catholic Civil Aviation Chaplains and Members of the Airport Chaplaincy, hosted by the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People on the theme: “*Evangelii Gaudium: What support for the pastoral ministry of airport chaplaincy?*”. I warmly greet the President and I thank him for his kind words. I greet all of you, who have taken part in these days of study for the exchange of ideas and pastoral experiences.

In particular, you reflected on how to implement the directives of the Apostolic Exhortation in the apostolate of airports, always beginning with witness, in order to help people open their hearts and lives to Christ. Pastoral concern in the area of civil aviation is directed to all who, for various reasons, belong to the civil community, independent of nationality, of religious creed or culture, with special attention to those among them who are poorest, who suffer or are marginalized the most.

The airport is a place of encounter for many people who travel for work, tourism or other reasons; Migrants and refugees, children and the elderly, people who are in need of healing and special attention pass through it. And then there are the people who work there every day, with their personal and professional lives. There is also an alarming number of passengers without

documents — often refugees and asylum seekers — who are detained in airport premises for long or short periods, sometimes without adequate spiritual and human assistance.

Sometimes tragic situations occur due to, for example, accidents or hijacking, with serious consequences for people's safety and psychological state. In these circumstances too, chaplains are called upon and sought by those who need comfort and encouragement.

In airports too, Christ the Good Shepherd wants to care for his sheep through the Sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist, where the encounter with the infinite mercy of God opens unimaginable avenues for evangelization. Indeed, to this day proclaiming the Gospel implies relieving people of the burdens that weigh upon their hearts and lives; it means proposing the words of Jesus as an alternative to the world's promises which don't bring true happiness. Today it has become more urgent to rediscover the compassionate face of God, and that is why the time of grace which the Holy Year of Mercy offer us will be a treasure.

Airport chaplaincies are called to be a place of unity in diversity for all the categories of people. Airports resemble cities within cities, where multiple realities intertwine and overlap. Like a great city, the airport is a cosmopolitan environment, multi-ethnic and multi-religious, and you, chaplains and members of the chaplaincies, are immersed in the life of this singular community; and therefore it is important to collaborate with docility and to always be attuned to the Holy Spirit, who creates unity in diversity (cf. Acts 2:1-13).

The mission in airports also requires that we work so that people may have the desire to listen to the Word of God. Whoever hears and takes the voice of God to heart becomes in his turn able to offer words of consolation and to help others confide in divine mercy, which is a safe haven for the weak and those who don't have the presumption to be saved alone. Divine mercy is open to all and shows the will of God who wants to save all people.

Dear brothers and sisters, I encourage you to work so that in the special places of "frontier" which airports are, there may be room to find and practice love and dialogue, which will nourish brotherhood among people and will preserve a peaceful social climate. And I pray together with you to the Lord that your apostolate, which partakes in the universal mission of the Church, be and efficacious proclamation of the Good News.

I bless all of you and your communities. May Our Lady protect you. And, please, do not forget to pray for me.