



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO PARTICIPANTS IN A PILGRIMAGE OF THE GUANELLIAN FAMILY

*Paul VI Audience Hall
Thursday, 12 November 2015*

[Multimedia]

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

I thank you for the words you addressed to me. Not only did you present your *Opera* to me, but in a certain way you also wished to welcome me into your family. Today is an important Solemnity for you: you are celebrating the Mother of Divine Providence, who is your Patroness, and above all, the Mother of your family, as St Luigi Guanella wished.

You have just celebrated the first centenary of his birth into Heaven. I should like to try to imagine what he would say to you to confirm you in faith, hope and charity. He would certainly do so with his sincere and genuine simplicity; so I thought of three practical verbs: to trust, to look and to hasten.

To trust. Don Guanella's life had at the centre the certainty that God is a merciful and provident Father. For him, the heart of the faith was knowing himself as an always beloved child whom the Father takes care of, and therefore brother of all, called to instill trust. God is Father and cannot but love us. Nor is he capable of being far from his children. If we are far from him, we are awaited; when we draw near, we are embraced; if we fall, he lifts us up; if we are repentant, he forgives us. He always wants to come to meet us. St Luigi so believed in this concrete and provident love of the Father that he often had the courage to surpass the limits of human prudence, to put the Gospel into practice. Providence, for him, was not "poetry" but reality. God takes care of us and wants us to trust him.

I think the heavenly Father is most displeased when he sees that his children do not trust in him completely: perhaps they believe in a distant God more than in the merciful God. In many there may also arise the uncertainty that God, although Father, is also a master. Thus it may seem

better not to trust in him completely, because he could ask for something that is too demanding or even send a trial. But this is a great deception: it is the ancient deception of the enemy of God and of man, who camouflages reality and conceals good with evil. It is the first temptation: to distance oneself from God, intimidated by the suspicion that his paternity is not truly provident and good. Instead, God is only love, pure and provident love. He loves us more than we love ourselves and knows what is truly good in us. Therefore he wants that, over the course of life we become what we are at the moment of Baptism: be loved children, who are able to conquer fear and not fall into lamentation, because the Father takes care of us. Are you convinced of this?

The second verb is *to look*. The Father Creator also engenders creativity in those who live as his children. So they learn to look at the world with new eyes, made more luminous by love and hope. They are eyes that enable one to look inside oneself with truth and to see far and wide in charity. Under this gaze, others do not seem like obstacles to overcome, but brothers and sisters to welcome. Thus, as Don Guanella said, one discovers that “love of neighbour is the comfort of life”.

Problems are never lacking in the world and, unfortunately, our time witnesses new forms of poverty and many injustices. However, the greatest lack is that of charity. Above all we need people with eyes renewed by love and a gaze that instills hope. Because, as your founder also said: “love will enable one to find ways and words to comfort those who are weak”.

Sometimes our spiritual vision is nearsighted, because we are unable to look beyond ourselves. At other times we are farsighted: we like helping those who are far away, but we are incapable of bending down to those who are beside us. Sometimes, instead, we prefer to close our eyes, because we are tired, overcome by pessimism. Don Guanella, who recommended looking at Jesus starting from his heart, invites us to have the Lord’s gaze: a gaze that instills hope and joy, capable at the same time of experiencing a “lively sense of compassion” for those who are suffering.

And, finally, *to hasten*. “The poor are the beloved children” of the Father, said St Luigi, who liked to repeat: “one who gives to the poor, serves God”. As the Father is gentle and concrete with his smallest and weakest children, so so too must we not keep our brothers and sisters in difficulty waiting, because — these are again the words of Don Guanella — “poverty cannot wait. And we cannot stop so long as there are poor to be helped!” Our Lady hastened to reach her cousin Elizabeth (cf. Lk 1:39). We too hear the Spirit’s invitation to go in haste to meet those in need of our care and our affection because, as St Luigi taught, “a Christian heart that believes and hears cannot pass by the indigence of the poor without helping them”.

Your family sprang from trust in the Father, under the gaze of Jesus and in the maternal hands of Mary. I thank you for the good you do and I encourage you to continue, tirelessly. I bless you all affectionately and I ask you, please, to pray for me. Don’t forget!

Now I invite you to pray to Our Lady: Hail Mary....

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