



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO THE GROUP OF THE "LAZARE" ASSOCIATION FROM FRANCE

*Paul VI Audience Hall
Saturday, 28 August 2021*

[[Multimedia](#)]

Prepared address by the Holy Father

Dear friends,

I welcome you to Rome on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Lazarus Association. I thank your representative for his kind words. I greet each one of you with affection and, through you, I express my spiritual closeness to all the members of your association in different countries.

I thank God for the beautiful experience you create in cohabitation and fraternity, which is lived out on a daily basis. You have an opportunity here to be, not only for yourselves but also for the world, a window to display the social friendship that we are all called to live. In an environment strewn with indifference, individualism and selfishness, you help us understand that the values of an authentic life are found in accepting differences, respecting human dignity, listening, attention to others, and service to the most humble. Indeed, “love for others, for who they are, moves us to seek the best for their lives. Only by cultivating this way of relating to one another will we make possible a social friendship that excludes no one and a fraternity that is open to all” (*[Fratelli Tutti](#)*, 94).

In society, you may feel isolated, rejected and endure exclusion. But do not give up, do not get discouraged. Go forward, cultivating in your hearts the hope of an infectious joy (cf. *[Evangelii Gaudium](#)*, 88). Your witness of life reminds us that “the poor are true evangelizers, for they were the first to be evangelized and called to share in the Lord’s joy and his kingdom” (*[Message for the](#)*

Fifth World Day of the Poor, 13 June 2021).

Dear friends, I invite you to remain steadfast in your convictions and in your faith. You are the loving face of Christ. So spread around you this fire of love that warms cold and dry hearts. Do not be satisfied with just a life of friendship and sharing between the members of your association, but go further. Dare to take a chance on love given and received freely. Go out to the peripheries, which are often filled with loneliness, sadness, inner wounds and loss of the zest for life. With your words and actions, pour the balm of consolation and healing on tormented hearts. Never forget: you are the gift, God's present day; you have a special place in his loving heart. Even if the world turns a scornful gaze upon you, you are precious, you count for a great deal in the eyes of the Lord. I wish to repeat it again: God loves you, you are his privileged ones. So do not let yourselves be robbed of the joy of living and helping others to live.

I entrust each of you and your families to the Lord, through the intercession of the Virgin Mary, and I impart my heartfelt Apostolic Blessing to you, to your leaders present here and to the members of the association throughout the world.

Please do not forget to pray for me.

Pope's extemporaneous words

I had written a discourse to share with you but I will consign it to you in writing because I want to speak about what came out today.

I will pause on the last image, the door. This experience of the open door, the closed door, the fear that they will not open the door to me, the fear that they may close the door in my face.... This experience that we have just heard about from one of you is the experience of each one of us, if we look within ourselves.

And I ask: what is my relationship to the door?

Some think that the door is one of their possessions and they put a lock on it and close it for themselves. Others are afraid to knock on the door. It is that fear that we have of knowing whether we will be welcomed and accepted. Others want to enter but are afraid of the door and they try to enter through the window. And we can thus imagine many situations and ask ourselves, what relationship do I have to the door?

The door is God, so what is my relationship to the door?

Do I take possession of the door for myself and not allow anyone to enter, or am I afraid to knock on the door, or do I hope that without knocking someone will open it to me? Each of us has different attitudes towards God, who is the door.

Sometimes in life one has to have the humility to knock on the door. Sometimes one has to have the courage to not be afraid of who will open the door, which is God, for me.

And once I have entered, I have to have the largesse not to close the door behind me, without opening it so that others may enter, and this is what “Lazarus” does: it opens doors. And it is what I wish to thank you for today, this witness, not only of “doormen” — you do not tend to the door, you are not “doormen” — but of men and women who — as they once opened the door to each one of you — feel the need to open it to others.

The door is God, who opens out to us, the door is our heart ... it is open, it is protected.... It is all a job of thinking, which you know how to do.

I thank each of you for the witness you give, and keep going. “Lazarus” is something small, few people, few places, before so much need. But Jesus said something once: that leaven too is a small thing, but it is capable of multiplying, that the seed is a small thing but capable of making a large tree grow. The worst thing that can happen to “Lazarus” is to forget that it is small, because if it becomes large in heart, through power, pride and complaisance, the tree will not grow and its mass will not expand.

Your wealth is not in the bank, your richness is being small, and continue like this.

And pray for the Church, that she may learn, our Holy Mother Church, we men and women of the Church, to always open the door and to have an attentive ear to those who knock on the door, at times softly.

Thank you.

L'Osservatore Romano, Weekly Edition in English, 3 September 2021