

SPEECH TO THE HOLY FATHER BY HIS EMINENCE

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MOST BLESSED FATHER,

It is with joy and hope that we the participants at the 19th General Assembly of Caritas Internationalis, which is also celebrating its 60th anniversary, are here before you today.

We are very grateful to be able to attend this Audience, and especially for the words of His Eminence Tarciso Cardinal Bertone, Secretary of State of Your Holiness, who honoured us by presiding at our opening Mass, as well as the words of the other Cardinals who accompanied us during our days in Rome and the Preacher of the Pontifical Household, Father Raniero Cantalamessa.

In a world that has given up dreaming and doesn't believe in utopia in its most genuine sense, Caritas Internationalis remembers the story of Joseph who was sold by his brothers to some merchants. The motivation for this crime was: "Here comes the dreamer, let us kill him". Today too, a world that is caught up in the idolatry of materialism and unfairness wants to kill ideals and dreams. Following your instructions, Holy Father, we have dreamt and continue to dream of a human family in which there is zero poverty.

In 1951, on the impetus of the Venerable Pope Pius XII and his assistant, who was then Monsignor Giovanni Battista Montini, we were born as a small train with 13 carriages. Today, 60 years later, the Caritas Express is a high-speed train comprising 165 countries, which are immediately present

wherever there is suffering and pain, whether arising from natural disasters or war situations, civil violence or violations of human rights.

60 years after the creation of this wonderful Confederation, we were granted Public Juridical Personality in 2004 by your predecessor, the Blessed Pope John Paul II.

We are grateful to you for receiving us today. But we are even more grateful for the pastoral and doctrinal care you give to Caritas, especially in the sense of agape and *diakonia*, through your teaching.

Holy Father, you know about the sufferings of the world. You know about the sufferings among people. You know about the sufferings in the Church. Caritas is a faith-filled answer given daily to such sufferings. Through the face of Caritas staff and volunteers, Jesus' love reaches out well beyond all borders and boundaries.

Caritas helps concretely in situations of disasters and in situations of need: recently in Japan, before in Haiti and Pakistan, still in Côte d'Ivoire and now in North Africa. Wherever the need of a sign of God's love is needed, there is and will be Caritas.

“Charity is love received and given”: this is your summary of “Deus Caritas est”, shared with us also in your encyclical “Caritas in Veritate”.

“Charity is love received and given”. That is also the title of a reflection book I have offered Caritas Internationalis on the occasion of its 60th anniversary.

Holy Father, we beseech you to carry on closely accompanying us as you have done in recent months, especially during the General Assembly. We count on your sure guidance and your prayers.

Owing to a special grace of Divine Providence, our 60th birthday coincides with the 60th anniversary of your Priestly Ordination, and we would like to

offer you our congratulations and best wishes in advance, beseeching the Lord to continue strengthening you with health and wisdom. With great faith and hope we ask you for your words and apostolic blessing.