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OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE



BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIEGE
PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS

BOLLETTINO

SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

N. 160509a

Monday 09.05.2016

To the Circolo San Pietro: be instruments of God's tenderness, especially for the frailest and marginalised

Vatican City, 9 May 2016 – This morning Pope Francis received in audience the members of the Circolo San Pietro, founded in Rome in 1869 during the papacy of Pius IX, who entrusted the task of providing assistance to the most vulnerable groups in society to this association, made up of historic Roman families. Pope Francis thanked them today for carrying out this duty, observing at the same time that the Circolo, "integrated within the ecclesial context of the diocese of Rome, is an expression of an outgoing Church: a Church that journeys to seek, visit, encounter, listen, share and stay by the side of the poorest people."

"Each one of you is asked not simply to go towards the neediest, but to go taking Jesus as you do so. It is the way of the disciples, of friends of the Lord; it is about sharing His word, that of the Gospel, of repeating His gestures of forgiveness, of love, of giving, of not seeking one's own prestige but rather the good of others."

The Pope offered the example of Our Lady, who never tired of reaching out, of "hastening to encounter and take God's visitation", as she did when she went to visit her relative Elizabeth. "Mary is an icon of faith. Only in faith does one take Jesus and not oneself. In this Holy Year of Mercy, while we make efforts to journey along the road of the works of mercy, we are called to renew ourselves in faith. To bring the visitation of the Lord to those who suffer in body and in spirit, we must cultivate faith, that faith that is born of listening to the Word of God and in seeking profound communion with Jesus. I encourage you to continue in your witness to the Gospel of charity, to be increasingly a sign and instrument of God's tenderness towards every person, especially the most fragile and discarded."

"I also thank you for Peter's Pence, which you collect in all churches as a sign of your participation in the Bishop of Rome's care for the poverty in this city. May your praiseworthy charitable activity be supported by prayer, to draw from the Heart of Christ the love to give to our brothers."