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PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLIS

# **BOLLETTINO**

SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

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## **Audience with Officials and Military of the Carabinieri Corps**

This morning, in Saint Peter's Square, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the officials and military of the Carabinieri Corps.

The following is the address delivered by the Pope to those present at the meeting:

### **Address of the Holy Father**

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

I welcome you with joy and thank you for coming. It is good to meet you. Today we are here in memory of Deputy Brigadier Salvo D'Acquisto, Servant of God and Hero of the Nation, who paid with the sacrifice of his life for his commitment to the Carabinieri Corps and, eighty years ago, on 23 September 1943, sacrificed himself to save innocent hostages captured by Nazi troops.

It is good for us to look at this colleague of yours, at the mission he carried out with a spirit of self-sacrifice, at the extreme witness he left us. Let us remember him together, but not to remain fixed in the past, but rather to find solid motivations on which to build the future. Remembering this colleague, therefore, does not mean lingering in a barren commemoration that remains backward-looking, but rather learning, from that sacrifice and that generosity, how to renew our commitment to the Force today, in the service of good and truth, in the service of society.

Salvo D'Acquisto lived in terrible years: the world was at war, racial persecution raged in Europe and the logic of hatred seemed to prevail. In the small suburb of Torrimpietra, where he had been sent following his request to be useful to the poor people, twenty-two young men risked being shot by the SS. The falsity of the accusation levelled against them, the blind rage bent on revenge of which they were the victims, the power of hatred that prevailed over pity, were overturned by the generosity of that young Deputy Brigadier, who promptly accused himself instead of the others and convinced those responsible that he was the only one to be executed. How can

we fail to see, in the background of this dramatic and touching story, the imitation of Jesus who, sent by the Father to show us his love, gave his life to free us from the power of death, took upon himself our sins, "he has born our griefs and carried our sorrows" and precisely "with his stripes we are healed" (*Is* 53:4-5).

Even today, the story and the sacrifice of Deputy Brigadier D'Acquisto represent a highly topical warning: while we live in a time contaminated by individualism and intolerance towards others, as well as by the exacerbation of so many forms of violence and hatred that we see in our cities, his witness delivers a message charged with the power of love. To you, who are daily committed to the service of justice and legality - and how much need there is for legality today! - I would like to say that all this finds its reason and its ultimate end in love. Justice, in fact, does not tend simply to impose punishments on those who have done wrong, but to re-establish people in the name of respect and the common good. In this sense, your mission is great. I would like to say that you Carabinieri are called upon not only to "do your duty" by enforcing regulations and procedures, but to make society more just and human. It is therefore great that you are passionate people, passionate like Salvo D'Acquisto; servants of the State and of the common good, who fight injustice, defend the weakest, offer a sense of protection to our cities. The affection of Italians for you testifies that these are not just words but, thanks to the example of so many of you, they are reality!

Of course, all this requires sacrifice and commitment, discipline and willingness, a sense of responsibility and dedication. I am thinking of those of you who find yourselves immersed in difficult contexts, where justice is often trampled underfoot, called upon to fight against all kinds of illegality, against organized crime and against a sense of impunity that is sometimes unfortunately entrenched, against the Mafia mentality. I think of those of you who carry out investigative tasks, putting sophisticated technologies at the service of patient, meticulous and competent research, so that lies are unmasked. I am also thinking of those of you who, in places of conflict and in international contexts, know how to extend a hand to the local population, becoming artisans of peace through mediation, human promotion and the silent building of good. And I am also thinking of those who perform a valuable daily service on the streets of our cities and in the corners of our neighbourhoods: brothers and sisters, thank you for all that you do, thank you!

Never be discouraged, never give in to the temptation to think that evil is stronger, that there is never an end to the worst, and that your commitment is pointless. Looking to Salvo d'Acquisto, let yourselves be animated by the passion for good. And please continue to show proximity to the people, who have always recognized this fine trait of yours. I bless you, your family members and loved ones: they too share in your mission! May the *Virgo fidelis* accompany you and, when you invoke her, please do not forget to say a prayer for me too. Thank you.

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