



The Holy See

I extend a cordial greeting to all those taking part in the Second National Conference on Mental Health, promoted by the Italian Ministry of Health. This event gives me the opportunity to express the Church's and my personal esteem for the doctors and health workers involved in this sensitive field. Their commitment to meeting the conditions of those suffering from mental disorders and offering them appropriate treatment is a great good for individuals and for society. It is therefore of the utmost importance to become increasingly aware of the professional and human requirements for caring for these brothers and sisters of ours. In the sensitivity that accompanies their fragility, they have felt with particular gravity the devastating psychological effects of the pandemic.

It is therefore to be hoped that, on the one hand, the health system for the protection of those with mental illness will be strengthened, not least by supporting organisations engaged in scientific research into these illnesses, and, on the other, by promoting associations and voluntary work alongside patients and their families. It is so important to involve the vital context in which the patient finds him- or herself, so that the warmth and affection of a community is not lacking. The medical profession itself benefits from integral care of the person. Caring for others is not just a skilled job, but a real mission, which is fully realised when scientific knowledge meets the fullness of humanity and is translated into the tenderness that knows how to approach and take others to heart.

I therefore hope that the Symposium, to which distinguished experts are contributing, will inspire in institutions, educational agencies and the various spheres of society a renewed sensitivity to those suffering from mental health problems, in order to instil greater confidence in so many of our brothers and sisters marked by frailty. It is also a question of helping to fully overcome the stigma with which mental illness has often been branded and, in general, to ensure that the culture of community prevails over the mentality of rejection, according to which greater care and attention is given to those who bring productive advantages to society, forgetting that those who suffer allow the irrepressible beauty of human dignity to shine forth in their wounded lives.

The pandemic has presented health workers with enormous challenges, showing us all the need to have an appropriate approach to health care to ensure no one is left behind and to care for all in an inclusive and participatory manner. Your National Conference is a step in this direction, and as

I thank you and all those at various levels who are committed to alleviating the pain of the suffering, I would like to express my warm encouragement to you to continue on the fruitful path of caring in solidarity.

In expressing my sincere good wishes for the days of study and discussion which await you, I assure you of my remembrance in prayer for the patients, their families, the volunteers and all the health care personnel, while from my heart I invoke God's blessing upon each one of you.

Rome, Saint John Lateran, 14 June 2021

FRANCIS

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