

Address of His Holiness Pope Francis

World Congress of Cardiologists

Fiera di Roma, 31 August 2016

Good morning! I was pleased to accept the invitation of the Executive Committee of the European Society of Cardiology to meet with you on the occasion of the World Congress which brings together cardiologists from various countries. I am particularly grateful to Professor Fausto Pinto for his kind words and, through him, I thank each of you for the scientific work in these days of study and discussion, but above all for your dedication to so many who are sick.

You look after the heart. How much symbolism is enshrined in this word! How many hopes are contained in this human organ! In your hands you hold the beating core of the human body, and as such your responsibility is very great! I am sure that as you find yourselves before this book of life with its many pages yet to be discovered, you are filled with trepidation and awe.

The Magisterium of the Church has always affirmed the importance of scientific research for human life and health. The Church not only accompanies you along this demanding path, but also promotes your cause and wishes to support you. The Church understands that efforts directed to the authentic good of the person are actions always inspired by God. Nature, in all its complexity, and the human mind, are created by God; their richness must be studied by skilled men and women, in the knowledge that the advancement of the philosophical and empirical sciences, as well as professional care in favour of the weakest and most infirm, is a service that is part of God's plan. Openness to the grace of God, an openness which comes through faith, does not weaken human reason, but rather leads it towards knowledge of a truth which is wider and of greater benefit to humanity.

At the same time, we know that the scientist, in his or her research, is never neutral, in as much as each one has their own history, their way of being and of thinking. Every scientist requires, in a sense, purification; through this process, the toxins which poison the mind's pursuit of truth and certainty are removed, and this enables a more incisive understanding of the meaning of things. We cannot deny that our knowledge, even our most precise and scientific knowledge, needs to progress by asking questions and findings answers concerning the origin, meaning and finality of reality; and this includes man. The sciences alone, however, whether natural or physical, are not sufficient to understand the mystery contained within each person. When man is viewed in his totality – allow me to emphasize this point – we are able to have a profound understanding of the poorest, those most in need, and the marginalized. In this way, they will benefit from your care and the support and assistance offered by the public and private health sectors.

By means of your invaluable work, you contribute to the healing of physical illness and are able to perceive that there are laws engraved within human nature that no one can tamper with, but rather must be “discovered, respected and cooperated with” so that life may correspond even more to the designs of the Creator (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 36). For this reason, it is important that men and women of science, as they examine themselves in the light of that great mystery of human existence, do not give in to the temptation to suppress the truth (cf. *Rom* 1:18).

With these sentiments, I renew my appreciation for your work. I ask the Lord to bless your research and medical care, so that everyone may receive relief from their suffering, a greater quality of life and an increasing sense of hope.