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For volunteer not-for-profit organisations

## DECEMBER

**“We pray for volunteer non-profit organisations committed to human development; may they find people dedicated to the common good and ceaselessly seek out new paths to international cooperation”**



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## PRAYER INTENTION REFLECTION

ADDRESS TO THE FEDERATION OF CHRISTIAN ORGANIZATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEER SERVICE (FOCSIV)<sup>14</sup>

Francis

4 December 2014

[...] Your interventions alongside men and women in difficulty are a vivid proclamation of the tenderness of Christ, who walks with the humanity of all times. Follow this path of voluntary and unselfish commitment. There is so much need of the value of gratuitousness: the poor can never become an opportunity for profit! Poverty today has had a makeover — there are new kinds of poverty! — and among the poor different expectations are growing: they aspire to be leaders, they organize themselves, and most of all they practice the solidarity that exists among the suffering, among the least. You have been called to read these signs of the times and to become an instrument which serves to draw attention to the poor. Solidarity with the poor is thinking and acting in terms of community, of the priority of the life of all over the appropriation of goods by the few. It is also fighting the structural causes of poverty: inequality, unemployment and homelessness, the denial of social and labour rights. Solidarity is a way of making history with the poor, avoiding the allegedly altruistic works that reduce the other to indifference.

Many of the countries where you work know the scandal of war. Working for the development of peoples, you are also cooperating to build peace, seeking with tenacious determination to disarm minds, to draw people near, to build bridges between cultures and religions. Faith will help you to do so even in the most difficult countries, where the spiral of violence seems to leave no room for reason. Your activity in refugee camps is a sign of peace and hope. There you encounter desperate people, faces marked by oppression, children who hunger for food,

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<sup>14</sup> See full message:

[https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/december/documents/papa-francesco\\_20141204\\_focsiv.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/december/documents/papa-francesco_20141204_focsiv.html)

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for liberty and for a future. How many people in the world flee from the horrors of war! How many people are being persecuted because of their faith, forced to abandon their homes, their places of worship, their lands, their loved ones! How many lives are torn apart! How much suffering and how much destruction! In light of all this, a disciple of Christ does not draw back, does not turn his face away, but seeks to take on this painful humanity with closeness and evangelical welcome.

I am thinking of migrants and refugees, who seek to leave behind harsh living conditions and every type of danger. Cooperation is needed from everyone, institutions, NGOs and ecclesial communities, to promote paths of harmonious coexistence among various people and cultures. Migratory movements call for appropriate reception procedures that do not leave migrants adrift at sea or in the hands of unscrupulous traffickers. At the same time, effective collaboration is necessary among states, in order to efficiently regulate and manage such phenomena.

#### CATECHESIS FOR ALL WORKERS OF MERCY AND VOLUNTEERS<sup>15</sup>

Francis

3 September 2016

Brothers and sisters, you represent the large and varied world of voluntary workers. You are among the most precious things the Church has, you who every day, often silently and unassumingly, give shape and visibility to mercy. You are *crafters of mercy*: with your hands, with your eyes, with your hearing, with your closeness, by your touch... craftsmen! You express one of the most noble desires of the human heart, making a suffering person feel loved. In the different contexts of need of so many people, your presence is the hand of Christ held out to all, and reaching all. You are the hand of Christ held out: have you thought about this? The credibility of the Church is also conveyed in a convincing way through your service to abandoned children, to the sick, the poor who lack food or work, to the elderly, the homeless, prisoners, refugees and immigrants, to all struck by natural disasters... Indeed, wherever there is a cry for help, there your active and selfless witness is found. In bearing one another's burdens, you make Christ's law visible (cf. *Gal 6:2; Jn 13:34*). Dear brothers and sisters, you touch the flesh of Christ with your hands: do not forget this. You touch the flesh of Christ with your hands. Be always ready to offer solidarity, to be steadfast in your closeness to others, determined in awakening joy and genuine in giving comfort. The world stands in need of concrete signs of solidarity, especially as it is faced with the temptation to indifference. It requires persons who, by their lives, defy such individualism, which is the tendency to think only of oneself and to ignore the brother or sister in need. Be always happy and full of joy in the service you give, but never presume to think that you are superior to others. Instead, let your work of mercy be a humble and eloquent continuation of Jesus' presence who continues to bend down to our level to take care of the ones who suffer. For love "builds up" (*1 Cor 8:1*), day after day helping our communities to be signs of fraternal communion.

#### ➤ 5 December 2022 – International Volunteer Day

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<sup>15</sup> See full message:

[https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2016/september/documents/papa-francesco\\_20160903\\_giubileo-operatori-misericordia.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2016/september/documents/papa-francesco_20160903_giubileo-operatori-misericordia.html)

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