



Rome, april 21, 2025

Dear Sisters, Confreres, Cooperators,

Pope Francis has been called to the Father's House, he greeted everybody on Easter day, with his blessing "Urbi et Orbi" and with that "pilgrimage" in the midst of the faithful crowding around him in St. Peter's square. A good shepherd who wants to stay with his flock to the point of offering his life. This is confirmed by the last words of his testament:

"This suffering that has appeared in the last part of my life, I offer to the Lord for peace in the world and the brotherhood among peoples".

We are united to the sorrow of the whole Church and of so many people in the world who could recognise in Pope Francis a man of God, an advocate for the poor and the marginalised, a wise and brave witness of the greatest values of humanity...

We thank the Lord for the gift of his life, rich of fruits of evangelical messages of truth and love, done with speech, writings, teaching, but especially with authentic and prophetic gestures.

We also want to recall our little personal memory, going back to the general audience accorded by Pope Francis to the Guanellian Family on the occasion of the centenary year of don Guanella's passage to heaven, on November 12, 2012.

First of all, **a gesture** that needs no comment.

The protocol called for a group of chosen representatives of the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence, the Servants of Charity, and the Guanellian Cooperators from different parts of the world to kiss the Holy Father's hand. They were standing in the first lines on the left of the hall, ready to climb the stage, but Pope Francis came down from the others side, choosing to greet one by one all those persons with disability and old age that were there on wheelchairs.

And then, the words of a speech that appears drawing more value from Pope Francis' life.

In that solemn and joyful day, the Holy Father tried to imagine what the Founder would have liked to tell us *to be confirmed in faith, in hope, and in charity* and thought of three practical verbs: **to trust, to look and to hasten.**

To trust. Don Guanella's life had at the centre the certainty that God is a merciful and provident Father. For him, the heart of the faith was knowing himself as an always beloved child whom the Father takes care of, and therefore brother of all, called to instill trust. God is Father and cannot but love us. Nor is he capable of being far from his children. If we are far from him, we are awaited; when we draw near, we are embraced; if we fall, he lifts us up; if we are repentant, he forgives us. He always wants to come to meet us.

The feeling of being the always beloved child ... brother/sister of all ... being sure that God always wants to come to meet us: isn't it also a summary of Pope Francis' spirituality, of him who made mercy the main road of the new evangelisation?

The second verb is to look. The Father Creator also engenders creativity in those who live as his children. So they learn to look at the world with new eyes, made more luminous by love and hope. They are eyes that enable one to look inside oneself with truth and to see far and wide in charity. Under this gaze, others do not seem like obstacles to overcome, but brothers and sisters to welcome. ... Problems are never lacking in the world and, unfortunately, our time witnesses new forms of poverty and many injustices. However, the greatest lack is that of charity. Above all we need people with eyes renewed by love and a gaze that instills hope.

To have eyes that enable one to look inside oneself with truth and to see far and wide in charity ... to see others not like obstacles, but brothers and sisters to welcome ... to fight the lack of charity: a "Guanellian" programme fully lived by Pope Francis, with prophetic gestures that were awakening the Church, shaking away the indifference of many, giving hope.

And, finally, to hasten. ... As the Father is gentle and concrete with his smallest and weakest children, so so too must we not keep our brothers and sisters in difficulty waiting, because — these are again the words of Don Guanella — "poverty cannot wait. And we cannot stop so long as there are poor to be helped!" Our Lady hastened to reach her cousin Elizabeth (cf. Lk 1:39). We too hear the Spirit's invitation to go in haste to meet those in need of our care and our affection because, as St Luigi taught, "a Christian heart that believes and hears cannot pass by the indigence of the poor without helping them"

We must not keep our brothers and sisters in difficulty waiting ... : the Holy Father was prompt to urge the Church go move out towards the periphery, to welcome all, to raise voices in defence of the oppressed, to look for all means to promote reconciliation, peace, brotherhood.

Remembering that audience, we join our prayer for the soul of Pope Francis with the commitment to draw light and strength from his words, his example, his intercession, to live worthily our Guanellian vocation. It is a sure source because, as don Guanella tells us: "The Holy Spirit, as a pure light brightens the mind of the Pope. The light of the Holy Spirit, from the person of the Vicar of Jesus Christ extends as a bright little flame in the minds and hearts of all the faithful, who are devout children for the one who takes the place of our Lord and Saviour on earth". (Vol.III p.964)

The Holy Father Francis left us on April 21st, the anniversary of the beatification of Sr. Chiara Bosatta. We like to imagine them together, with the Holy Founder and all the Saints, dwelling in the embrace of the Father, with the heart full of joy and the eyes open to the needs of the brothers and sisters who are still pilgrims in the world.

Let us be accompanied by Pope Francis' greeting at the end of the audience to the Guanellian Family:

Your family sprang from trust in the Father, under the gaze of Jesus and in the maternal hands of Mary. I thank you for the good you do and I encourage you to continue, tirelessly. I bless you all affectionately and I ask you, please, to pray for me. Don't forget!

Padre Umberto Brugnoli SdC

Dott. Antonio Valentini GC

Sr Neuza Maria Giordani FSMP



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