

Service of Thanksgiving for the 52nd Anniversary of Sant'Egidio

Greetings from Marco Impagliazzo

Good evening! Mine is a word of thanks on behalf of the Community for the presence of many people on this fifty-second anniversary of Sant'Egidio: I thank everyone for being here to accompany our journey in Rome and in the world. I greet all those present and a special thought to the Interior Minister, Luciana Lamorgese, thanking her for her collaboration on the various humanitarian corridors and the integration of migrants. A heartfelt thanks goes to the Cardinals and Bishops and to the Cardinal Secretary of State, Pietro Parolin for his affectionate words and which invite us to responsibility, to be salt and to be light. We are grateful for your presence! Please convey on our thanks and our affection to the Holy Father Francis. With the Pope, our Bishop, we dream of a Church, a people of all, no one excluded, so that the Lord's mercy will touch everyone's heart, without exclusions.

Today, with you and the many who are in this cathedral of Rome, we look to the future of our city as a fraternal city. An outgoing community moves towards this dream towards the outskirts of the city and the world. The city has always been our horizon, from the first steps. Above all, the hidden and unknown city, that of poverty and exclusion. Andrea Riccardi and his friends met the first children of the school of peace on the banks of the Tiber, in the shanty towns - there were many at the end of the sixties – at that time populated by immigrants from southern Italy. The School of Peace was born there and the many paths of solidarity started there. The Word of God is our compass, the city our horizon.

Rome has opened us to the universal, from Rome we have encountered many worlds, often of poverty and conflict. Here was born also our commitment to peace, which you know well, and that you mentioned Your Eminence. Today peace is the desire of millions of people, in a world divided and marked by conflicts of various kinds. We have not backed down from this responsibility, to seek peace. John Paul II said: "Peace is a construction site open to everyone, not just specialists, scholars and strategists. Peace is a universal responsibility: it passes through a thousand small acts of daily life ". Today we feel this invitation even more timely. We want to be an encouragement and a way for those who do not believe in the logic of confrontation, of violent opposition, of hatred, working every day to overcome conflicts, the logic of division and to mend the fabric of society where it is torn. In many situations a deep look is needed, but also a friend and an engaged one, free from the detachment of being just an afraid observer. You can't be indifferent! Pope Francis told us when visiting us in Trastevere: "Go ahead on this path: prayer, the poor and peace. And by walking in this way you help to grow compassion in the heart of society - which is the real revolution, that of compassion and tenderness -, to make friendship grow instead of the ghosts of enmity and indifference ".

Life in the suburbs of Rome and in the human and existential suburbs of the world has given us many lessons. It taught us a lot. First of all, to grow in humanity. The meetings with people of all conditions and backgrounds, year after year, have been our school: the road as a story. Those of

us who met a poor man, stopped to listen to him, became friends with him, received what he would not have imagined. It was the experience of Francis of Assisi, who after meeting the leper said that the Lord had transformed what seemed bitter to sweet. But this can happen in the life of all of us. And meet the poor with many people. I wish all of us, together with the Community of Sant'Egidio, to be, each day, men and women who seek what unites and leave aside what divides. Our world urgently needs this. Thanks for your presence.

Lateran, February 8, 2020