



(ZENIT, Vatican City, July 6, 2016).- Below is a ZENIT translation of Pope Francis' address this morning the participants in the Pilgrimage of the Poor from the French diocese of the Province of Lyon. The group of about 200 French pilgrims included very poor and homeless people supported by the Sappel community. The group is marking the upcoming 100th anniversary of the birth of Father Joseph Wresinski, founder of the ATD [Fourth World International Movement](#), which is dedicated to eradicating persistent poverty worldwide.

In his address, he reminds those present how Jesus became poor like one of them, called on them to maintain courage and hope, and asked for them to pray for the rich and religious who turn their heads away from the poor and suffering:

Dear friends,

I am very pleased to welcome you. Whatever your condition, your history, the burden you carry, it is Jesus who brings us together around Him. If there is something that [special about] Jesus, it is precisely His capacity to accommodate [all conditions and situations]. He greets everyone as they are. In Him, we are brothers, and I would like you to feel how much you are welcomed here; your presence is important to me, and also it is important that you feel at home.

With the leaders who accompany you, you give a beautiful testimony of evangelical fraternity in this walk together in the pilgrimage. Indeed, you have come together, at each other's side. You generously help one another, providing resources and time in order for you to be able to come; and you, by giving their presence here, gift them to us gathered, to me, and to Jesus himself.

Because Jesus wanted to share your condition, He made Himself, out of love, one of you: despised by men, forgotten, one that does not count. When you happen to experience all this, do not forget that Jesus was tried like you. It is 'the proof that you are precious in His sight, and that He is near you. You are in the heart of the Church,' in the words of Father Joseph Wresinski, because Jesus, in His life, has always given priority to people who were like you, who lived similar situations. And the Church, who loves and prefers the ones whom Jesus loved and preferred, cannot stay quiet until She reached all those who experience rejection, exclusion, and do not matter to anyone. In the heart of the Church, you allow us to meet Jesus, because you don't talk about Him as much with words, but with your whole life. And you all witness the importance of small gestures, of the reaching out toward everyone, which helps to build peace, reminding us that we are brothers, and that God is the Father of us all.

I can try to imagine what people thought when they saw Mary, Joseph and Jesus on the streets, fleeing to Egypt. They were poor, they were being persecuted: but there, there was God.

Dear companions, I want to thank you for all you do, faithful to the intuition of Father Joseph Wresinski, who wanted to set off always by *a sharing of life*, and not by abstract theories. Abstract theories lead us to the ideologies, and ideologies lead us to deny that God became flesh, one of us! Because it is the sharing life with the poor that transforms and converts us. And think about this! Not only that, you encounter them - even helping whoever is ashamed and hides - not only do you walk with them, striving to understand their suffering and their frame [of mind]; but you strive to enter into their desperation. In addition, you raised around them a community, thus giving back them a life, an identity, a dignity. And the Year of Mercy is an opportunity to rediscover and live this dimension of solidarity, of fraternity, of help and mutual support.

Beloved brothers, I ask you above all to keep your courage and, while in the midst of your troubles, to keep the joy of hope. That flame that lives in you will not be extinguished. Because we believe in a God who protects all the injustices, that consoles all pains and knows how to reward those who keep trusting in Him. Looking forward to that day of peace and light, your contribution is essential for the Church and for the world: you are witnesses of Christ, you are intercessors before God Who hears us, and in a very special way, your prayers.

You ask me to remember that in the Church of France that Jesus is suffering at the door of our churches, if the poor are not there. If the poor are not [there] ... "The treasures of the Church are the poor," said Roman deacon, St.

Lawrence. And finally, I would like to ask you a favor, rather than a favor, I give you a mission: a mission that only you, in your poverty, you will be able to perform. I mean, Jesus, at times, was very strict and strongly reprimanded people who did not welcome the message of the Father. And so, as He said those beautiful words “blessed” be the poor, the hungry, those who weep, those who are hated and persecuted, has said that another, called by him, is frightening! He said: “Woe!” And he said to the rich, to the sages, those who laugh now, to those who like to be flattered, that they are hypocrites. I give you the task to pray for them, so that the Lord changes their hearts. I ask you also to pray for the perpetrators of your poverty, that they convert! Pray for the many rich people who dress in purple and fine linen and celebrate with large banquets, without realizing that there are so many like Lazarus, at their door, eager to be fed the leftovers of their canteen. Pray also for the priests, the Levites, who – seeing the man beaten and half dead – keep going, looking the other way, because they do not have compassion. For all these people, and also surely to others that are linked negatively with your poverty, and with so many sorrows, their smile from the heart, you want the best for them and ask Jesus to be converted. And I assure you that if you do this, there will be great joy in the Church, in your heart and even in His beloved France.

All together, now, under the gaze of our Heavenly Father, I entrust you all to the protection of the Mother of Jesus and St. Joseph, and I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing. And now let us all pray the Our Father.

[Our Father, recited in French] [Blessing in French]

[Original text: Italian]

[Translation by Deborah Castellano Lubov]