

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE MEETING SPONSORED BY THE
SCIENCE AND LIFE ASSOCIATION**

*Clementine Hall
Saturday, 30 May 2015*

[Multimedia]

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I welcome you on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the founding of your Association, and I thank you for this meeting and for your commitment. In particular, I thank the Madam President for the kind words she addressed to me on behalf of everyone.

Your service in support of the human person is important and encouraging. Indeed the protection and promotion of life is a fundamental duty, even more so in a society marked by the negative logic of waste. For this reason, I see your Association as hands which reach out to other hands and support life.

It is a demanding challenge, in which you are guided by the principles of openness, of attention, of closeness to people in their actual situations. This is excellent. Clasped hands not only guarantee solidarity and balance, but also transmit human warmth.

In order to protect the person you focus your attention on two basic actions: *going out in order to encounter* and *encountering in order to support*. The reciprocal energy of this movement moves from the centre toward the peripheries. Christ is at the centre. And from this centrality you direct yourselves toward the the various conditions of human life.

The love of Christ urges us (cf. 2 Cor 5:14) to make ourselves the servants of the small ones and of the old, of every man and every woman, whose the primordial right to life is to be recognized and protected. The existence of the human person, to whom you dedicate your solicitude, is also your founding principal; it is life in its unfathomable depth which originates and accompanies all scientific progress; it is the miracle of life which always places in crisis any form of scientific presumption, restoring primacy to wonder and beauty. Thus Christ, who is the light of mankind and of the world, lights the way so that science may always be a knowledge at the service of life. When this light falters, when the knowledge forgets the contact with life, it becomes infertile. For this reason, I invite you to keep your gaze fixed on the sacredness of each human person, so

that science may truly be at the service of mankind, and not mankind at the service of science.

Using a magnifying glass, scientific reflection pauses to analyze certain details. Thanks to this analytical capacity too, we reaffirm that a just society recognizes as primary the right to life from conception to its natural end. I would like us, however, to go further, and to think carefully about the time that joins the beginning with the end. Therefore, in recognizing the inestimable value of human life, we must also reflect on how we use it. Life is first and foremost a gift. But this reality generates hope and future if it is enlivened by fruitful bonds, by familial and social relationships which open new prospects.

The level of progress in a society is measured by its capacity to safeguard life, above all in its most fragile stages, more than by the spread of technological instruments. When we speak of mankind, we must never forget the various attacks on the sacredness of human life. The plague of abortion is an attack on life. Allowing our brothers and sisters to die on boats in the strait in Sicily is an attack on life. Dying on the job because the minimum safety standards are not respected is an attack on life. Death from malnutrition is an attack on life. Terrorism, war, violence; so is euthanasia. Loving life means always taking care of the other, wanting the best for him, cultivating and respecting her transcendent dignity.

Dear friends, I encourage you to launch again a renewed culture of life, able to instill networks of trust and reciprocity and to offer horizons of peace, mercy and communion. Do not be afraid to undertake a fruitful dialogue with the entire world of science, also with those who, although not professing to be believers, are open to the mystery of human life.

May the Lord bless you and Our Lady keep you. And please, do not forget to pray for me! Thank you.

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