



The Holy See

"CLINTON GLOBAL INITIATIVE 2023"

[New York, 18-19 September 2023]

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

Monday, 18 September 2023

Thank you, Mr President, for inviting me to your meeting. Thank you very much.

It is important to spread a culture of encounter, a culture of dialogue, a culture of listening and understanding.

It is necessary to share our views on how to contribute to the common good and how not to neglect the most vulnerable people, such as children, who, through the “Bambino Gesù” Foundation, are at the origin of our meeting.

We all know that we are experiencing an epochal change. Only together can we come out of it better — together. Only together can we heal the world from the anonymity of the globalization of indifference.

You, Mr President, have referred to the many challenges of today: climate change, the humanitarian crises affecting migrants and refugees, childcare and so many others.

To these I would add one more: the wind of war blowing around the world, fuelling — in that spirit of war — what I have often called the “piecemeal third world war”, which now involves us all.

A major and common assumption of responsibility is needed. No test, no challenge is too great if we face it from the personal conversion of each one of us, from the contribution that each one of us can make to overcome it, and from the awareness of being part of the same destiny. No challenge can be faced alone; only together can we face it, as sisters and brothers, children of

God.

That is why I always encourage all women and men of good will — and I want to do the same here — and I say to them: do not give up. Do not give up in the face of difficulties — because difficulties are part of life. And the best way to face them is always to pursue the common good, but never alone, always together.

Difficulties can bring out the best or the worst in us. Therein lies the test, the challenge. We must combat selfishness, narcissism and division with generosity, humility and dialogue; unity is always better than conflict.

It is time to find the change towards peace, the change towards fraternity. It is time for weapons to cease, for us to return to dialogue and diplomacy. It is time for the designs of conquest and military aggression to cease. That is why I repeat: no to war — no to war.

It is time to work together to stop the ecological catastrophe, before it is too late. That is why I have decided to write a new document, 8 years after the Encyclical *Laudato Si'*.

Let us stop while there is time, please — let us stop while there is time.

It is also time to face migration emergencies together, remembering that we are not talking about numbers, but about people: men, women and children. When we talk about migration, let us think of the eyes of the children we meet in refugee camps. It is time to think about the youngest, the children: their education, their care.

As you well know, Mr President, this meeting has its origin in a small but great project that I am very interested in. It concerns children and their health.

In Italy, in Rome, near the Vatican, there is a very special hospital: the Bambino Gesù Paediatric Hospital. In the world it is known as the Pope's hospital, but for me that is not why it is "unique". It is obvious that our little great hospital cannot solve the problems of sick children all over the world; however, it wants to be a sign, a testimony of how it is possible — although with many efforts — to combine great scientific research, aimed at curing children, with free hospitality for those in need. Science and hospitality, which rarely come together in the same field.

Three years ago — in the middle of the Covid emergency — I baptised two Siamese twin girls, Ervina and Prefina, who were joined at the head, and who were separated by the doctors of the Bambino Gesù Hospital, in a very complicated operation; they came from Central Africa, where they would probably have died, and now they are fine; they did the same with other pairs of twins and with many children from poor countries. And all pro-bono.

The hospital welcomes children. That's why here at the Vatican, helicopters often land on our heliport with children brought urgently from various parts of the world.

In these terrible months marred by war, the Bambino Gesù Hospital has treated more than two thousand young Ukrainian patients, who fled their country together with their parents and relatives.

In the field of health, today more than ever, the first and most concrete form of charity is science: the ability to heal, which, however, must be accessible to all. Bambino Gesù is therefore a tangible sign of the charity and mercy of the Church.

Incurable diseases exist, but there are no incurable children. Let us be clear about this — there are insurmountable illnesses, but there are no incurable children.

This is the hallmark of the Bambino Gesù Hospital, this is its dream, may it also be yours. If you wish.

Thank you, Mr President, thank you all, and I wish you a good day. Thank you.

After Mr Bill Clinton's words, the Pope concluded with the following words:

I am concerned about both, children and climate change. Please, let us act on climate change before it is too late.

L'Osservatore Romano, Weekly Edition in English, Fifty-sixth year, number 38, Friday, 22 September 2023, 22 September 2023, p. 4.