



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF THE ITALIAN UNION OF BLIND AND SIGHT-IMPAIRED
PERSONS
ON THE OCCASION OF THE FEAST OF SAINT LUCY***

*Clementine Hall
Saturday, 13 December 2014*

[Multimedia]

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I welcome you and thank you for this meeting. I thank the President, Dr Mario Barbuto, for his words introducing this meeting.

He referred to St Lucy as the patroness of those without sight. This was unexpected, since your association is non-confessional; yet you proposed that our meeting take place today, confirming that this tradition retains a certain significance for you.

I would thus like to mention several human values that the example of St Lucy offers us. I underline: human values. Lucy lived them in an exemplary fashion thanks to her faith in Christ, but they can be shared by all.

First of all, Lucy reminds us of a value which seems to me very important for you too: *courage*. She was a young defenceless woman, however she faced torture and a violent death with great courage, a courage that came to her from the Risen Christ, with whom she was united, and from the Holy Spirit, who dwelt within her.

We all need courage to face the trials of life. People who are blind and visually impaired are in special need of this, so as not to close with in themselves or assume the attitude of a victim. On the contrary, they must open themselves to reality, to others and to society in order to learn to understand and appreciate the abilities that the Lord has placed in each one of us, truly in everyone, without exception! This, however, takes courage, strength of spirit. Therefore, another

value that St Lucy brings to mind is the fact that she *was not alone*, but *she belonged to a community*, she was a member of a body of which Christ is the Head, a stone in a building which has Christ as its the foundation. This aspect is also reflected in human terms. You are an association, and this is a value! An association is not the sum of individuals, it is much more. Today there is great need to experience the associative aspect with joy and commitment, because this moment of history is “at a low ebb”, and it’s not felt strongly. Be a group, work in solidarity, meet together, share your experiences, share your resources... this is all part of the civic heritage of a people. Often people who live with disadvantages or disabilities can say from their experience to everyone: we are not “monads”, we are not meant to be isolated but to form relationships together, to complete each other, help each other, stand together and support each other. The presence of disabled people prompts everyone to form a community or rather, to be a community, that we accept one another with our limitations. Because everyone has abilities, but everyone has limitations too!

Lastly, Lucy tells us that life is made to be given. She lived this out in the supreme form of martyrdom, but the value of *the gift of self* is universal; it is the secret to true happiness. Man does not become completely fulfilled by having or by doing. One is fulfilled by loving, i.e. by giving of oneself. And this can also be understood as the secret of the name “Lucy”: a person is “full of light” to the extent that he or she is a gift to others. In reality, every person is a gift, he or she is a precious gift!

Dear friends, living according to these values today can also bring about misunderstanding; it’s tiring to go against the current, but this is not surprising. Testimony always requires paying in the person. Modern societies that focus chiefly on the rights of the “individual” risk forgetting the importance of the community and that of the free gift of self to others. Thus there is still a need to fight, relying on the example and intercession of St Lucy! I hope you do so with courage and with the joy of doing it together.

Happy Christmas to you and all your members!