

Drugs and vaccines must be available for everybody

19 September 2020

Address of his Holiness Pope Francis to the members of the “Banco Farmaceutico” Foundation

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Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

Welcome! I would like to thank the president of the Banco Farmaceutico for his kind words. As he reminded me, this year marks the twentieth anniversary of the birth of Banco Farmaceutico: best wishes! From that initial intuition, we have come a long way. As well as being present in Italy, you also operate in other countries.

Those who live in poverty are poor in everything, even medicines, and therefore their health is more vulnerable. Sometimes they run the risk of not being able to obtain treatment because of lack of money, or because some people in the world do not have access to certain medicines. There is also a “pharmaceutical marginality”, and this must be said. This creates a further gap between nations and between peoples. On an ethical level, if there is the possibility of curing a disease with a drug, it should be available to everyone, otherwise it creates injustice. Too many people, too many children are still dying in the world because they are denied access to a drug that is available in other regions, or a vaccine. We know the danger of the globalisation of indifference. Instead, I propose to globalise treatment, that is, the possibility of access to those drugs that could save so many lives for all populations. And to do this takes a joint effort, a convergence that involves everyone. And you are the example of this joint effort.

I hope that scientific research can make progress in seeking new solutions to problems old and new. The work of many researchers is valuable and represents a magnificent example of how human study and intelligence are able to develop, as far as possible, new paths of healing and cure.

Pharmaceutical companies, by supporting research and directing production, can generously contribute to a more equitable distribution of medicines.

Pharmacists are called upon to provide a service of care close to those most in need, and in science and conscience they work for the integral good of those who turn to them.

Through their legislative and financial choices, governments are also called upon to build a fairer world in which the poor are not abandoned or, worse still, discarded.

The recent experience of the pandemic, in addition to a major health emergency in which almost one million people have already died, is turning into a serious economic crisis, which still results in poor people and families who do not know how to move forward. While charitable assistance is being provided, it is also a question of combating this pharmaceutical poverty, particularly with the widespread use of new vaccines in the world. I repeat that it would be sad if, in providing the vaccine, priority were given to the wealthiest, or if this vaccine became the property of this or that country, and was no longer for everyone. It must be universal, for all.

Dear friends, thank you very much for your service to the weakest. Thank you for what you do. The Medicine Collection Day is an important example of how generosity and the sharing of goods can improve our society and bear witness to that love in the neighbourliness that the Gospel requires of us (cf. Jn 13:34). I bless all of you present here, and your families. I bless and ask God to bless all of you who, as the president said, are of different religions. But God is the Father of all, and I ask: God, bless all of you, your families, your work, your generosity. And, because priests always ask, I ask you to pray for me. Thank you.