



Celebration of the Holy Thursday Liturgy at Castelnuovo di Porto

24/03/2016

Circonvallazione della Protezione Civile - Castelnuovo di Porto (RM) - Italy



This coming Holy Thursday, Pope Francis will travel to Castelnuovo di Porto to spend time with the young refugees staying at the shelter for those requesting asylum (CARA). It will be a simple but eloquent sign. Part of the visit will be the rite of the washing of the feet, in which the Holy Father will bend down to wash the feet of twelve refugees as a sign of service and concern for their condition.

At the audience last Saturday, Pope Francis spoke about the gesture of the washing of the feet: "By washing the feet of the Apostles, Jesus wished to reveal God's mode of action in regard to us, and to give an example of his "new commandment" (Jn 13:34) to love one another as He has loved us, that is, laying down his life for us." Applying this example to the actions of daily life, he added, "Love, therefore, is the practical service that we offer to others. Love is not a word, it is a deed, a service; humble service, hidden and silent it is expressed in the sharing of material goods, so that no one be left in need. This sharing with and dedication to those in need is the lifestyle that God suggests, even to non-Christians, as the authentic path of humanity."

In the light of this consideration, one understands the symbolic value intended by Pope Francis in his visit to the CARA of Castelnuovo di Porto and his bending down to wash the feet of the refugees.

He wants to tell us that we must pay attention to those who are weakest in this moment of history; that we are all called to restore their dignity without any subterfuge. He prompts us to look toward Easter with the eyes of those who live their faith in service to those who bear the imprint of suffering and violence in their very faces.

Many of these youths are not Catholic. The sign of Pope Francis becomes all the more eloquent for this. It indicates that their way of respect is the way to teach peace. Respect, in its semantic meaning, signifies being aware that there is another person next to me. A person who walks with

me, suffers with me, rejoices with me. A person to whom, on day, I could turn to find support. By washing the feet of the refugees, Pope Francis asks for respect for each of them.