



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO THE DELEGATIONS OF CONFARTIGIANATO

*Paul VI Audience Hall
Saturday, 10 February 2024*

[Multimedia]

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

I am pleased to welcome so many of you, entrepreneurs and representatives of the Confederation, from all over Italy. I greet the President and all of you who form part of Confartigianato.

Born in 1946 from the ashes of the second world war, your Association has contributed to the rebirth and development of the national economy. In these decades, the craft sector has undergone notable changes, passing from small workshops to companies producing goods and services even on a large scale. The use of technologies has increased the possibilities of the sector, but it is important that they do not end up replacing the imagination of man, created in the image and likeness of God. Machines replicate, even with exceptional speed, while people invent!

Your activities value the human ingenuity and creativity. In particular, I would like to highlight how your work is connected to three parts of the body: the hands, the eyes and the feet. The heart is missing...

The hands. Manual work makes the craftsman a participant in the creative work of God. Making is not the same as producing. It puts into play the creative capacity that is able to keep together the abilities of the hands, the passions of the heart and the ideas of the mind. Your hands know how to realize many things that make you God's coworkers. The Lord says: "Like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand" (*Jer 18:6*). You bless and thank the Lord with the gift of the hands and the work that it enables you to express. We know that not everyone has this good

fortune: there are those who sit idle, there are those who are unemployed and those who are seeking employment. These are all human situations that need to be healed. Sometimes it also happens that your companies are looking for qualified personnel and cannot find them: do not be discouraged in offering jobs and do not be afraid to include the most fragile groups, namely young people, women and migrants. Thank you for your contribution to breaking down the walls of exclusion towards those who have serious disabilities or are disabled perhaps because of an accident at work, towards those who are kept on the margins and exploited. Every person must be recognized in his or her dignity as a worker. Let us never clip the wings of the dreams of those who want to improve the world through work and use their hands to express themselves.

The eyes. The hands, the eyes. The craftsman has an original outlook on reality. He or she has the capacity to recognize in inert material a masterpiece even before realizing it. What is for everyone else a block of marble, is for a craftsman a piece of furniture; what is for everyone else a piece of wood, is for a craftsman a violin, a chair, a frame! The craftsman is the first to intuit the destiny of beauty that matter can have. And this brings him closer to the Creator. In Mark's Gospel, Jesus is referred to as "the carpenter" (6:3): the son of God was a craftsman, he learned his trade from Saint Joseph in the workshop in Nazareth. He lived for several years among planes, chisels and carpentry tools. He learnt the value of things and work. Consumerism has spread an ugly mentality: the throwaway mentality. But creation is not a sum of things, it is gift, "a joyful mystery to be contemplated with gladness and praise" (Encyclical Letter *Laudato si'*, 12). And you craftsmen help us to have different eyes on reality, to recognize the value and beauty of the material that God has placed in our hands.

The feet. The hands, the eyes... the feet. The products that emerge from your activities "walk" all around the world and embellish it, responding to the needs of the people. Craftsmanship is a road for work, for developing the imagination, for improving environments, conditions of life, relationships. For this reason, I like to think of you as artisans of fraternity. The parable of the Good Samaritan (cf. *Lk* 10:29-37) reminds us of this craftsmanship of relationships, of sharing together. The Samaritan makes himself close, he stooped down and lifted up the wounded man, putting him back on his feet and anointing him with dignity through gestures of care. Thus "the parable shows us how a community can be rebuilt by men and women who identify with the vulnerability of others, who reject the creation of a society of exclusion, and act instead as neighbours, lifting up and rehabilitating the fallen for the sake of the common good" (Encyclical Letter *Fratelli tutti*, 67). Our feet enable us to meet many fallen people along the way: through work we can enable them to walk with us. We can become fellow travellers in the midst of the culture of indifference. Every time we take a step closer to our brother, we become artisans of a new humanity.

I encourage you to be artisans of peace in a time in which wars reap victims and the poor are not heard. Your hands, your eyes and your feet are signs of a creative and generous humanity. And may your heart always be impassioned by beauty. Thank you for the good you achieve. I entrust

you to the protection of Saint Joseph; may he protect you, your families and your work. I bless you from my heart. And I ask you, please, to pray for me. Thank you.

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