Vatican
Vatican News
Pope Francis, sitting in a wheelchair, rolls by seated guests in front of a crowd

Pope Francis greets people during an audience with members of the John XXIII Community at the Vatican Jan. 14, 2023. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

Carol Glatz

View Author Profile



Catholic News Service

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

Vatican City — January 17, 2023
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

No physical limitation or setback can diminish the value of any human being because each person is a unique and beloved child of God, Pope Francis said.

"We are not anonymous, we are not photocopies, we are all originals! And this is how we should be: originals, not photocopies," he said during an audience at the Vatican Jan. 14 with members of the Pope John XXIII Community association.

"God knows us one by one, with our name and our face, which is unique," he said.

"Certainly, we also have our limitations; some of us unfortunately have heavy limitations to bear," the pope said. "But this detracts nothing from the value of a person: each one is unique, a son or daughter of God, each one is a brother or sister of Jesus."

"A Christian community that welcomes the person as he or she is thus helps to see them as God does," which is with a look of love, he said.

"God also sees our limitations, it is true, and helps us to bear them," the pope said. "But God looks above all at the heart and sees every person in his or her entirety. God sees us as an image of Jesus, his only begotten son, and with his love he helps us to become more and more like him."

The pope thanked the many families at the audience who offer foster care, emphasizing the importance of welcoming children and others into a loving home so they may be "regenerated by Christian love."

Advertisement

These are men and women "who open the doors of their home to give a family to those who do not have one. A real family; not a job, but a life choice. In it there is room for everyone: minors, people with disabilities, the elderly, Italians or foreigners, and anyone who is looking for a fixed point from which to start again or a family in which to find themselves," he said.

Francis also thanked those who were unable to be at the day's audience and had sent him their stories and questions.

"I would like to address some of you personally," he said, such as Sara, 13, who fled Iraq and carries in her heart "the holy desire that children not be robbed of their childhood: May God help you achieve this!"

The people offered guidance to others without naming them, urging one child who "would like to see your grandmother who has gone to heaven," to "speak with her in your heart and follow her good example, and one day you will see her again."

Another young person, the pope said, "like many teenagers," wrote about the "struggle to perceive the beauty of Mass." But the pope responded, "Do not fear; at the right moment, the living Jesus will let you feel his presence."

Francis also thanked a "little friend, who remembers the innocents who are killed in the womb."

Noting that many members of the community meet online to pray the rosary for peace every Sunday, the pope told them, "God listens to your prayer for peace, even if he does not seem to. God listens to it, and we believe that God gives us peace, immediately, today!"