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Msgr. Dal Toso: 'Pope Francis' Ukraine collection for most in need'

Pope Francis last Sunday [April 24, 2016] launched a Europe-wide extraordinary collection aimed at helping those people suffering from the war in Ukraine. The proceeds from that collection went to the Vatican's dicastery for humanitarian relief efforts, the Pontifical Council "Cor Unum".

A special commission was instituted within the organization for the distribution of the collection, which aims to ease the humanitarian situation in Ukraine for the benefit of the entire population.

Msgr. Giampietro Dal Toso, Secretary of "Cor Unum", just returned to Rome from Ukraine and spoke to Vatican Radio about the collection.

Philippa Hitchen's report:

In the interview, Msgr. Dal Toso said his recent visit to Ukraine helped to identify the people and structures with whom Cor Unum can work to best aid the suffering population.

"I spent the last few days in Kiev to identify those persons and that minimum of structure needed to realize in loco [on location] the intentions of the Pope, which is exactly that of being able to help the people. In this first phase, the aid provided will be, above all, of a humanitarian nature to

provide for people's basic necessities, which include having something to eat, a roof over their heads, something to wear, and also some medicine.”

He also said the collection will be for all peoples in need, regardless of race, culture, or creed.

“The collection will be destined concretely for people in need, obviously without distinction of religious, ethnic, or cultural affiliation, as it has always been in the tradition of the Church and as the Pope desired for this collection: to help all those in need and especially help them with their basic needs.”

Ecumenical importance

Msgr. Dal Toso also noted the ecumenical aspect of the extraordinary collection.

He said the collection “above all called for the collaboration of other Christian churches, who had voiced their availability to help and identify the needy. It is also an initiative for the benefit of all. Therefore, it will automatically have a positive impact on the relationship with the Orthodox Churches and within the Catholic Church herself.”

Government response

Asked about the reaction of the Ukrainian government to the initiative, he said “I found primarily a great appreciation from the authorities for this initiative, and a clear desire to collaborate as much as possible. But I would say, however, even more importantly, that this initiative of the Pope has already been successful, for the simple fact that on Sunday, 24 April all of Europe spoke about this situation, unfortunately mostly forgotten. Ukraine is living this conflict in a general silence, and millions of people are suffering in that general silence. This collection has been useful, not just to collect money, but above all to sensitize our Europe to the problems we are living within the continent itself.”

During his trip, Msgr. Dal Toso also visited a refugee camp which houses around 100 internally-displaced people with the Apostolic Nuncio for Ukraine, Archbishop Claudio Gugerotti. From one day to the next, he said, their lives were turned upside down.

“They are people who live not knowing what tomorrow holds for them. I believe this is the most difficult condition, even beyond the daily difficulties of living, but it is precisely this lack of prospective which probably wounds them most and makes them suffer.”

Link:

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