



VATICAN - The Church for leprosy patients: 547 leprosy centers in the world

Vatican City (Agenzia Fides) - The Missionary Church has a long tradition of service to leprosy patients, often abandoned even by their own families, and has always provided them, in addition to medical and spiritual assistance, even concrete possibilities of recovery and reintegration into society. In many countries discrimination against these patients is still serious and for the terrible mutilation it causes.

The Church runs 547 leprosy centers in the world, according to the latest Statistical Yearbook of the Church, by continent: in Africa 198, in America 56 (total), in Asia 285, in Europe 5 and Oceania 3. The nations that host the largest number of leprosy centers are: in Africa: Democratic Republic of Congo (32), Madagascar (29), South Africa (23), in North America: United States (1), in Central America: Mexico (8) in Central America-Antille: Dominican Republic (3), in South America: Brazil (17), Peru (6), Ecuador and Colombia (4), in Asia: India (220), Korea (15), in Oceania: Papua New Guinea (3).

In his message for the 60th World Day for fight against leprosy, which is celebrated on Sunday, January 27, the President of the Pontifical Council for Health Care Workers, His Exc. Mgr. Zygmunt Zimowski, recalls that "according to the most recent data of WHO, about two hundred and twenty thousand people - men, women and children contracted leprosy in 2011 and many of these new cases were diagnosed when the disease was at an advanced stage." This proves inadequate access to diagnostic facilities, the lack of training in the prevention, the need for targeted actions concerning hygiene. In fact, leprosy is a "fatal disease if not properly cured," as well as other "neglected diseases", which annually "continue to cause hundreds of thousands of victims. These are diseases that are an authentic scourge in some parts of the world, but do not have sufficient attention by the international community."

Faced with this "medical emergency," Archbishop Zimowski, especially in light of the Year of Faith, invites everyone to work towards this World Day for the fight against leprosy constitutes a new "occasion for intensifying the service of charity in our ecclesial communities so that each one of us can be a Good Samaritan for others." (SL) (Agenzia Fides 26/01/2013)

> LINKS

The full text of His Exc. Mgr. Zimowski's Message, in Italian, English, Spanish:

http://press.catholica.va/news_services/bulletin/news/30357.php?index=30357&lang=it