

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO BULGARIA AND NORTH MACEDONIA
[5-7 MAY 2019]

MEETING WITH THE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY
ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS

Church of Saint Michael Archangel in Rakovsky
Monday, 6 May 2019

[Link](#)

I would like to share with you an experience I had a few hours ago. This morning I visited the Vrazhdebna refugee camp and met asylum-seekers and refugees from various countries of the world who are looking for a better place to live than the one they left. I also met the Caritas volunteers [applause for the Caritas volunteers who stand up, each one wearing a red T-shirt]. When I came in here and saw the Caritas volunteers, I asked who they were because I thought they were fire fighters! All in red! There [at Vrazhdebna Centre] they told me that the heart of the Centre's – this refugee Centre's – life and work is born from the recognition that every person is a child of God, regardless of ethnicity or religious confession. In order to love someone, there is no need to ask for a curriculum vitae; love precedes, it always goes onward, it takes the first step. Why? Why is love gratuitous? In that Caritas Centre are many Christians who have learned to see with God's own eyes. God is not worried about labels, but seeks out and awaits each person with a Father's eyes. But do you know something? We have to be careful! We have fallen into the culture of labels: "this person is like that, that one like this, this one like that...". This is not what God wants. He or she is a person, made in God's image. No labels! Let's leave labels up to God; we just give love, to every person. This is true of gossip too. It's so easy for gossip to come between us! "Ah, this one is like that, this one does that...". We are always labelling people. I am not talking about you, because I know there is no gossiping here, but let's think about places where gossip happens. And that means labelling: labelling people. We must move from the culture of labelling things to the reality of naming persons. Seeing with the eyes of faith is a summons not to spend your life pinning labels, classifying those who are worthy of love and those who are not, but trying to create conditions in which every person can feel loved, especially those who feel forgotten by God because they are forgotten by their brothers and sisters. Brothers and sisters, those who love do not waste time in self-pity, but always try to do something concrete. In the Centre, they learn to see problems, to acknowledge them and to confront them; they let themselves be questioned and try to discern things with the eyes of the Lord. As Pope John said: "I never met a pessimist who managed to do something good". Pessimists never do anything good. Pessimists ruin everything. When I think of a pessimist, I think of a delicious pie. What does the

pessimist do? He or she pours vinegar onto the pie, and ruins everything. Pessimists ruin everything. Love on the other hand opens doors, always! Pope John was right: "I never met a pessimist who managed to do something good". The Lord is the first not to be pessimistic. He constantly tries to open up paths of resurrection for all of us. The Lord is an incurable optimist! He is always seeking to think well of us, to carry us onward, to wager on us. How marvellous it is when our communities become building sites of hope! The optimist is a man or woman who creates hope in the community