

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO MEMBERS OF THE ITALIAN RED CROSS**

Paul VI Audience Hall
Saturday, 27 January 2018

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[...] Your activity, then, is even more deserving of the gratitude of every citizen because it takes place in the most diverse situations, coping with fatigue and dangers of various kinds. This is the case of assistance given to the victims of earthquakes and other natural disasters, which alleviates the evidence of the affected populations, representing a sign of the closeness of the whole Italian people. Of equal value are your efforts in the rescue of migrants during their arduous journey on the sea, and in receiving those who disembark and hope to be welcomed and integrated. The hand that you extend to them and which they grasp is an important sign, which should be translated as: "Not only do I help you in this moment, lifting you from the sea and bringing you to safety, but I assure you that I will be there and I will take your destiny to heart". For this reason, your presence alongside immigrants is a prophetic sign, so necessary for our world. I said the word "prophetic sign": the prophet, to say it in a language we all understand – the prophet is one who gives a "slap"; with his way of living, with the service he gives, and in words... a slap, a wake-up call, he gives a real slap to social selfishness, the selfishness of societies. And he reawakens the best that is in the heart! But give a slap with your word and your witness, not with the hand! [...]