

ADDRESS TO POPE FRANCIS

**FEBA Annual Convention 2019
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Address to his Holiness Pope Francis, given by President Jacques Vandenschrik on the occasion of the audience conceded to European Food Banks Federation (FEBA)

Jacques Vandenschrik, *President European Food Banks Federation*
Rome, 18 May 2019

Holy Father,

We know the dedication of Your Holiness to the eradication of poverty, to the protection of our planet's resources to ensure to each man and each woman a future that is more just, more equitable, more dignified.

On this unforgettable day, we, your humble guests, responsible for the food banks in 29 countries of Europe and other parts of the world, meet as we do every year, to exchange our experiences and sustain our commitment.

In Rome, this year, we also celebrate 30 years of existence of food banks in Italy. All of us, with the 35,000 volunteers in Europe, are engaged in recovering food that would otherwise be destroyed and to distribute it to more than 8 million people through the assistance of 47,500 charities. Through us, there are thousands of colleagues, Catholics and non-Catholics alike, who pay tribute and homage to Your Holiness, to his ministry and express profound gratitude for the audience granted, and we most respectfully request Your Holiness' blessing.

All of us are committed to pursue our mission until necessary and with the respect each person is entitled to.

Since ancient times, feeding the body has been paralleled with the nourishment of the soul. Feeding: Is it not the first show of love from a mother to her newly born baby?

Giving food is never a gesture of disdain or even a degradation of human dignity. It is a gesture of solidarity, of concern, of fellowship and friendship which makes possible a more loving, more profound and more human relationship.

It is with growing anxiety that we see the gap between the haves and the have-nots widening daily. There is a tiny minority of extremely rich people, and most of them do not seem to have understood that they do not own the richness, rather they are temporary custodians of the wealth.

Will the very wealthy one day consider that richness is measured by generosity, by the capacity to give? Should this happen, perhaps the world would avoid a confrontation between the rich and the poor, that is becoming more detectable and more justifiable every day.

Every day, food bankers fight both against hunger as well as against food loss and waste. The women and men from the food banks are promoters of peace and human solidarity. Their



TOWARDS THE NEXT DECADE

TOGETHER



decision to create, to develop and to adhere to international federations such as the 'European Food Banks Federation' illustrate their resolve to contribute to borderless solidarity, truly human and universal.

We work daily, often silently, in the knowledge that the collection, control, transport and distribution of food is a lot more than a service. It supports the interaction among people, their experiences, their lives. Is it not warming to see that in this present world, dominated by image, where everything must be known and seen, human dignity resides also in the unknown, the anonymity?

I would like to close this speech in presenting your Holiness with our infinite gratitude for the opportunity to meet your Holiness and to receive his most important support for our mission.

