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Apostolic Trip of the Holy Father Francis in Colombia (6-11 September 2017) – Meeting in the Hogar San José in Medellín

Meeting in the Hogar San José in Medellín

Greeting of the Holy Father

In the afternoon, before leaving the *Conciliar Seminary*, the Holy Father Francis paused in the Chapel for a photograph with the seminarians and to offer a gift to the Seminary. He then travelled by car to the *Hogar San José*, a family home managed by the archdiocese of Medellín for disadvantaged children, victims of the violence and of abandonment.

Upon arrival, Pope Francis was welcomed by around a hundred children, and was greeted by the director of the Foundation, the director of the House, and a woman religious. Then, after receiving a floral tribute from two children, the Holy Father was accompanied to the central courtyard to the statue of St. Joseph, where he laid the flowers. Around three hundred children were present in the courtyard.

After welcome greetings from the director of the Foundation, a testimony from a girl and the performance of several songs, the Pope pronounced his greeting.

At the end of the meeting the exchange of gifts took place.

The following are the Holy Father's words of greeting:

Greeting of the Holy Father

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Dear Boys and Girls,

I am very happy to be with you here at “Saint Joseph’s Home”. Thank you for the welcome you prepared for me. I am grateful also to the director, Monsignor Armando Santamaría, for his words.

And I thank you Claudia Yesenia, for your courageous testimony – I told you that you were courageous. Hearing all of the difficulties you experienced, I thought of the unjust suffering of so many boys and girls throughout the world, who have been and continue to be innocent victims of the evil that others commit.

The Baby Jesus was also a victim of hatred and persecution; he too had to run away with his family, to leave his country and his home, in order to escape death. To see children suffer, wounds our hearts because children are Jesus’ favourites. We can never accept that they are mistreated, that they are denied the right to live out their childhood peacefully and joyfully, that they are denied a future of hope.

Jesus never abandons those who suffer, much less you, boys and girls, who are his special ones. Claudia Yesenia, in the midst of all the horrible things that happened, God gave you an aunt to watch out for you, a hospital to care for you, and finally a community to welcome you. This “home” is a sign of Jesus’ love for you, and of his desire to be very close to you. He does this through, and with, the loving care of all those good people who are with you, who love you and teach you. I think of those who direct this house, the sisters, the staff and so many who are already a part of the family, because they come here, they get involved, and they understand. For this is what you do here, you make this place a home: the warmth of a family where we feel loved, protected, accepted, cared for and accompanied.

I am happy that this place bears the name of Saint Joseph, and the other homes the names of “Jesus the Worker” and “Bethlehem”. It means that you are in good hands. Do you remember what Saint Matthew writes in his Gospel, when he tells us that Herod, in his foolishness, decided to kill the Infant Jesus? How, in a dream, God spoke to Saint Joseph by means of an angel, and entrusted to his care and protection his most valuable treasures: Jesus and Mary? Saint Matthew tells us that, as soon as the angel spoke, Joseph immediately obeyed, and did all that God told him to do: “He rose and took the child and his mother by night, and departed to Egypt” (*Mt 2:14*). I am sure that, just as Saint Joseph protected and defended the Holy Family from danger, so too he is defending you, caring for you and accompanying you. Alongside him are Jesus and Mary, because Saint Joseph can never be without Jesus and Mary.

To you, brothers and sisters, religious and lay people, and to those in the other homes who welcome and lovingly care for these children that from infancy have already known suffering and sorrow: I would like to remind you of two realities that you must never forget because they are part of the Christian identity – the love that knows how to see Jesus present in the smallest and weakest, and the sacred duty of bringing children to Jesus. In this task, with your joys and hardships, I commend you also to Saint Joseph’s protection. Learn from him, that his example may inspire you and help you in your loving care for these little ones, who are the future of Colombian society, of the world and of the Church, so that like Jesus, they may grow, be strengthened in wisdom and grace, before God and others (cf. *Lk 2:52*). May Jesus and Mary, together with Saint Joseph, accompany and protect you, and fill you with their tenderness, joy and strength.

I promise to pray for you, so that in this place of family love, you may grow in love, peace and happiness, and your wounds of body and heart may heal. God does not abandon you, God protects you and helps you. And the Pope keeps you in his heart. Please do not forget to pray for me. Thank you!
