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## **Greeting of the Cardinal Secretary of State for the Bambino Gesù Pediatric Hospital initiative “Dear Pope Francis, I give you a drawing” (Palidoro, 19 December 2017)**

An exhibition of drawings at Palidoro Hospital, Fiumicino, was inaugurated yesterday by His Eminence Cardinal Secretary of State Pietro Parolin, and from which there begins the fundraising campaign promoted by the Bambino Gesù Paediatric Hospital and “La Civiltà Cattolica”, the initiative “Dear Pope Francis, I give you a drawing”, which aims to support the care and reception of patients from abroad.

The following is the greeting from His Eminence Cardinal Pietro Parolin, given yesterday during the inauguration:

### **Greetings from the Secretary of State**

Excellence,  
Madam President,  
Distinguished doctors and paramedical staff,  
Ladies and gentlemen,  
Dear friends,

It is a welcome opportunity for me to speak at the opening of the exhibition “Dear Pope Francis, I give you a drawing”. I thank the Board of Directors of the Bambino Gesù Pediatric Hospital for this invitation. I also thank the authorities here today for their presence.

The exhibition brings together the drawings donated to the Holy Father by children from five continents. They communicate the world as seen by children. I would like to highlight the collaboration between the Bambino Gesù Pediatric Hospital and the magazine *La Civiltà Cattolica* to which these precious drawings were entrusted to enable them to bear fruit, as well as the young talents. They are a gift of children to the Pope and can now become a gift for other children.

The Hospital thus launches an initiative aimed at supporting health care activities for young patients without health coverage and coming from various continents. The Holy See, which cares about the good of children, joyfully supports this project.

In the international activity of the Holy See, a privileged place is occupied by the care for children, and in this context a key role is carried out by the Bambino Gesù Pediatric Hospital, which combines the passion of charity with the intelligence of medical knowledge. Supporting its action means broadening the boundaries of solidarity, both in welcoming children from different countries of the world, and in spreading education and knowledge.

I am pleased to visit the Palidoro Hospital on this occasion. This beautiful structure bears witness to the prophetic intuition of Blessed Paul VI who, in 1978 - almost 40 years ago - entrusted the centre, first managed by the Pontifical Relief Organization, to the Hospital.

In that gesture we can read an act of discernment, in interpreting the signs of the times: after the discovery of the Sabin vaccine and the diminution of polio, the structure, dedicated to the cure of that disease, needed to find a new vocation. It was an important challenge that required economic investments and competent human resources to be allocated to an isolated and peripheral territory.

That challenge of yesteryear is now beginning to bear fruit. As Pope Francis affirmed during the audience granted to the community of the Hospital in December last year, *“Bambino Gesù has not looked at its limits, but has instead created new spaces and many projects... This tells us that the quality of care depends not only on logistic aspects, but on the spaces of the heart. It is essential to enlarge the spaces of the heart: then Providence not fail to take care of concrete spaces too!”*.

The great commitment and the great passion of the people who have worked in Palidoro, are the sign of the ability to know how to enlarge the spaces of the heart and know how to wait, with the eyes of hope, for this to become a concrete space of welcome. We owe thanks to all those who have contributed daily to the development of the centre throughout this time.

Today we observe significant results that make the Palidoro centre to be an important point of reference for the Italian national health system; a place where concrete answers are offered to sick children and children. It is a structure that aims at excellence, equipped with the latest generation tools for rehabilitation and diagnostics.

The liturgical time of Advent, which we are living, teaches us the fruitful prospect of combining expectation and hope. It therefore encourages us to prepare ourselves better to welcome and respond to the needs of sick children, and to further improve ourselves. In the care service we need to continually follow the path of scientific and technical innovation, always keeping the patient and the family at the centre, fully respecting their rights and perceiving their needs.

This has always been the mission of the Bambino Gesù Pediatric Hospital as a whole. To accomplish it, it is crucial that activities of diagnosis and treatment are based on Gospel values shared by all the staff and directors, and that they be inspired by high levels of professionalism and transparency.

I would like to conclude with the words of Pope Francis: *“The gaze of Mary, Comfort of the Afflicted, brightens the face of the Church in her daily commitment to the suffering and those in need. The precious fruits of this solicitude for the world of suffering and sickness are a reason for gratitude to the Lord Jesus, Who out of obedience to the will of the Father became one of us, even enduring death on the cross for the redemption of humanity”* (Message for 25th World Day of the Sick, 2017).

In expressing my sincere thanks for your effort, I encourage you to persevere on the path you have undertaken, and I wish all of you and your families a holy Christmas and a serene New Year.

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