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Video Message of the Holy Father Francis on the occasion of the inauguration in Bangui, Central African Republic, of the new healthcare centre of the Bambino Gesù Hospital

The Almoner of His Holiness, His Eminence Cardinal Konrad Krajewski, will today inaugurate in Bangui, in the Central African Republic, the new healthcare centre of the Bambino Gesù Hospital, specializing in therapies for malnourished children, and the restructured building of the *Complexe pédiatrique* of the capital's paediatric hospital. The new Centre and the restructured area, realized at the behest of Pope Francis, was also supported by various solidarity initiatives and collections of funds, and entrusted entirely to the planning and care of the Bambino Gesù Hospital. The inauguration ceremony was attended by the president of the Bambino Gesù Hospital, Dr. Mariella Enoc; the apostolic nuncio of the Central African Republic, H.E. Msgr. Santiago De Wit Guzmán, the president of the Central African Republic, H.E. Mr. Faustin-Archange Touadéra, and other political authorities.

The following is the video message sent by the Holy Father Francis for the event:

Video Message of the Holy Father

Dear friends of the Paediatric Hospital of Bangui,

With joy I greet all of you on the festive occasion of the inauguration of the new healthcare structure dedicated to the children of the Central African Republic. This seat was born with the support of the "Bambino Gesù" Paediatric Hospital, engaged since spring 2016 in the formation of medical staff and others. I hope that it may become a centre of excellence, where children can find a response to and relief for their sufferings, with tenderness and love. I do not forget! I conserve in my heart the pained eyes of the many malnourished children I met during my brief visit to the hospital on the occasion of my trip to your country.

And I still remember the words of the doctor who was next to me: "The majority of these children will die, because they are gravely ill with malaria and they are malnourished". I heard this. No. this must not happen. The suffering of children is without doubt the hardest thing to accept. The great Dostoevsky posed the question:

“Why do children suffer?” Many times I ask myself the same thing: why do children suffer? And I do not find an explanation. I just look at the Crucified and invoke the merciful love of the Father for such great suffering.

This structure which is being inaugurated today is a concrete sign of mercy, that finds its origin in the Holy Year that I wished to open in advance – on 29 November 2015 – precisely in Bangui. The first door of a cathedral to be opened was that of Bangui, not that of Saint Peter’s. It was a gesture inspired by the Lord. Passing through the Holy Door of the Cathedral, I affirmed: “Bangui now becomes the spiritual capital of prayer for the Father’s mercy. Let us all implore peace, mercy, reconciliation, forgiveness and love”. I like to think that Holy Door is still open, and the river of mercy gives vital sap to this Paediatric Hospital and all those who work here. Remember always: “Many concrete acts of goodness and tenderness are shown to the weak and the vulnerable, to those most lonely and abandoned. There are true champions of charity who show constant solidarity with the poor and the unhappy” (Apostolic Letter *Misericordia et misera*, 17).

Therefore, I encourage you all to carry out your work in caring for children, driven by charity, always thinking of the “good Samaritan” of the Gospel: be attentive to the needs of your little patients, stoop with tenderness to their frailties, and in them you will be able to see the Lord. Those who serve the sick with love serve Jesus, Who opens to us the Kingdom of the heavens. May this hospital remind us all that what we are living is “the time of mercy because those who are weak and vulnerable, distant and alone, ought to feel the presence of brothers and sisters who can help them in their need” (*ibid.*, 21).

Dear brothers and sisters, exercising your medical profession, be artisans of mercy!

I address a respectful greeting to Mr. President Faustin-Archange Touadéra. I also greet the apostolic nuncio Msgr. Santiago De Wit Guzmán and the president of the Bambino Gesù Hospital, Ms. Mariella Enoc, who has given much for this work. And a greeting to Cardinal Konrad [Krajewski], who makes the Pope’s charity present in the world. Those who take care of the little ones are on the side of God. Do not forget: those who take care of the little ones are on the side of God and defeat the throwaway culture! May this new hospital become a model and point of reference for all the country. Remember: in the sick there is Christ and in the love of those who tend to His wounds, there is the way to encounter Him!

I bless you, and please, do not forget to pray for me. Thank you!
