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Apostolic Trip of His Holiness Francis in Mozambique, Madagascar and Mauritius (4 to 10 September 2019) – Visit to Zimpeto Hospital

Visit to Zimpeto Hospital

At 7.30 this morning, after farewell greetings to the staff of the apostolic nunciature and the benefactors, the Holy Father Francis transferred by car to the Zimpeto Hospital, situated in the outskirts of Maputo, which hosts the *Dream* centre for people affected by AIDS and HIV, established in 2002 by the Sant'Egidio Community.

Upon arrival, at 8.45, the Pope was received by the founder of the Sant'Egidio Community, Andrea Riccardi, by the national coordinator of the *Dream* project and the local director of the Maputo Centre, while the children performed a traditional song and dance.

At the entrance to the Centre, Pope Francis unveiled a commemorative plaque. Then, after greetings from the national coordinator of the *Dream* project, Dr. Cacilda Isabel Massango, and the presentation of a gift to the Pope from a patient, the Holy Father gave his address.

At the end, the Holy Father greeted twenty patients and paid a private visit to two wards in the Centre. He then transferred by car to the Zimpeto Stadium.

The following are the Pope's words of greeting, pronounced during his visit to the Zimpeto Hospital:

Greeting of the Holy Father

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I am grateful for your warm and fraternal welcome and I thank Cacilda for her kind words. Thank you too, for your lives and witness, which show that this multi-purpose health centre – Santo Egídio de Zimpeto - is a sign of

the love of God, who is ever ready to bring life and hope wherever death and suffering abound.

I cordially greet the director, the healthcare workers, the patients and their families, and all those present. Seeing the competence, professionalism and love with which you receive and care for so many suffering persons, particularly patients with HIV-AIDS, and especially mothers and children, makes me think of the parable of the Good Shepherd.

All those who come here, with despair and anguish, are like the man lying on the side of the road. Those of you here have refused to walk by or continue on your way like others (the Levite and the priest). This Centre shows us that there are always people ready to stop and feel compassion, who do not yield to the temptation to say "There is nothing to be done" or "It's impossible to fight this scourge". Instead, you have set about finding solutions. As Cacilda mentioned, you have heeded the silent, almost inaudible, cry of countless women, so many of them living in shame, marginalized and judged by all. That is why you opened this house, where the Lord lives with those lying on the side of the road – to those suffering from cancer or tuberculosis, and to hundreds of the malnourished, especially children and young people.

All of you who in various ways are part of this healthcare community thus become a sign of the heart of Jesus, so that no one will think "that his or her cry has gone unheard". You are "a sign of sharing with those in need, and you enable them to sense the active presence of a brother or a sister. The poor do not need intermediaries, but the personal involvement of all those who hear their cry. The concern of believers in their regard cannot be limited to a kind of assistance – as useful and as providential as this may be in the beginning – but requires a loving attentiveness that honours the person as such and seeks out his or her best interests" (*Message for the 2018 World Day of the Poor*, 18 November 2018, 3). Hearing this cry has made you realize that medical treatment, however necessary, is not enough. So you deal with the problem in its entirety, restoring dignity to women and children, and helping to point them towards a better future.

In this immense enterprise, thanks to your continual "listening" you too have come to experience your limitations and overall lack of means. The programme that you have set in place, which connects you with other places in the world, is an example both of humility, in recognition of your limits, and of creativity, since you are now part of a larger network. The free and voluntary commitment of so many persons in different fields, who have generously cooperated to train local operators, has enormous human and evangelical value.

At the same time, it is wonderful to see how this "listening" to the most vulnerable of the poor, the sick, puts us in contact with another part of our vulnerable world. I think of the "symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life... the earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor; she 'groans in travail' (*Rom 8:22*)" (*Laudato Si'*, 2). The sculptures of Makonde art, the *ujamaa*, in which various figures cling to one another and where unity and solidarity prevail over the individual, help us to see that we all come from the same stock. You have recognized this and your listening is leading you to find sustainable means in the search for energy and for gathering and storing supplies of water. Your concern for low environmental impact is a virtuous model, an example to be followed, in the light of the urgent situation created by the deterioration of our planet.

The parable of the Good Samaritan ends with his bringing the wounded man to an inn and entrusting the innkeeper with part of the expenses and a promise to pay the remainder upon his return. Women like Cacilda, the approximately 100,000 children who can write a new page of history free of HIV-AIDS, and all those nameless persons who today smile because they have been cured with dignity in their dignity, are part of the payment that the Lord has left with you. Having emerged from the nightmare of suffering, and without concealing their condition, they are now a sign of hope for many persons. Their willingness to dream can serve as an inspiration to many people lying on the wayside who need a welcoming hand. For your part, you will be repaid by the Lord "when he returns", and this should fill you with joy. As we leave this place, as you return to your daily tasks, where no one praises or applauds you, keep receiving those who come to you, go out and look for the wounded and helpless in the peripheries... Let us not forget that their names are written in heaven with the inscription: "These are the blessed of my Father". Renew your efforts to ensure that this hospital will always be a place that gives birth to hope. Here hope is born.

May God bless you, dear patients and family members, and all those who assist you with such great love and who encourage you to persevere. God bless you.
