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Audience with a representation from the “Francesco Miulli” Hospital of Acquaviva delle Fonti, Bari

This morning, in the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience a representation from the “Francesco Miulli” Hospital of Acquaviva delle Fonti, Bari.

The following is the Pope’s greeting to those present at the audience:

Greeting of the Holy Father

Your Excellency,

Ladies and Gentlemen, good morning!

I welcome you and thank you for this visit, which enables me to meet the working community of the “Francesco Miulli” Hospital of Acquaviva delle Fonti. It is an ecclesiastical body, and this brings even more responsibility to us as a Church. Indeed, it is a place that combines Christian inspiration with professionalism and clinical and technological innovation. I would like to focus on two essential aspects of your work: *putting the person at the centre and promoting scientific research*.

First: *putting the person at the centre*. Yours is an ancient hospital, founded nine centuries ago, as a “*hospital for the sick poor*”, that is, a welcoming and safe place where those who suffer can find shelter and help. And you try to be faithful to the commitment of those who went before you, continuing to place at the centre of your work the “*sick poor*”, and in them, Jesus, who said: “Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me” (cf. *Mt 25: 40*).

This has made you a dynamic body in continual growth, as shown by the way in which you constantly update both the care you offer and the structure, in order to provide the most complete service possible to patients. In fact, the new hospital site allows you to offer over 600 beds to patients, with operating theatres and operating

units, in which more than a thousand employees work with professionalism and self-sacrifice. I appreciated the opening, within the facility, of a multi-disciplinary outpatient clinic for migrants - realized in cooperation with diocesan Caritas -, which relies on the voluntary services of all medical and nursing staff. This is very good, and bears witness to the spirit with which you provide your service. With all this, one might say that "Miulli" is a valuable resource for your area, and also at national level.

And we come to the second point: *promoting scientific research*. Already for decades you have been engaged in this too, in collaboration with several Italian universities. However, for two years, with the accreditation of the Ministry for Universities and Research, the "Miulli" has become a University Hospital and has launched a single-cycle degree course in Medicine and Surgery. It is an objective of great value, which on the one hand enables the healthcare professionals present to provide a service recognized in both the academic and care spheres in their own territory, and on the other hand also gives the best local intelligences the opportunity not to emigrate - emigration is a problem that impoverishes the territories, and we know it -; on the contrary, it can encourage other high-level professionals to come and work in Italy, in an enriching exchange of skills over wider horizons.

Dear friends, the "Francesco Miulli" can favour a virtuous cycle for constantly improving healthcare, for the benefit of the community and patients, while at the same time having at heart quality of service and attention to people. I thank you for what you do, and I encourage you to continue enthusiastically on this road. From my heart I bless you, you and your work, and wish you a Merry Christmas! Please do not forget to pray for me. Thank you.
