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Francis remembers the suffering of refugees in his trip to Lesbos

Vatican City, 17 April 2016 – His recent trip to Lesbos and concern for those affected by the earthquakes in Ecuador and Japan, as well as the World Day of Prayer for Vocations and the working conditions of call centre employees were the main themes considered by the Pope after the Regina Coeli prayer today.

"I wish to thank those who accompanied with prayer the visit I made yesterday to the island of Lesbos in Greece", said Francis. "I took the solidarity of the Church to the refugees and to the Greek people. The Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and Archbishop Ieronymos of Athens and All Greece were with me, as a sign of the unity in charity of all the Lord's disciples".

"We visited one of the camps, where there are refugees from Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Africa, and many other countries. The Patriarch Bartholomew, Archbishop Ieronymos and I greeted around three hundred refugees, one by one. Many of them were children. Some of them, of these children, had seen the deaths of their parents and companions, many of whom had drowned in the sea. I saw so much suffering. I would like to relate a particular case, of a young man, not even 40 years old. I met him yesterday, with his three children. He is a Muslim and told me that he was married to a Christian woman. They loved and respected each other. But tragically terrorists slaughtered her, because she refused to deny Christ and abandon her faith. She is a martyr. And that man cried so much".

He went on to mention the earthquake that affected Ecuador yesterday, causing more than two hundred deaths and thousands of injuries, and called for prayers for the Ecuadorian population, as well as for Japan, also affected by major earthquakes. "May the help of God and of their brothers give them strength and support".

"Today is the World Day of Prayer for Vocations", he continued. "We are invited to pray for vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life. ... And to you young people, boys and girls, here in the square: think of whether the Lord is calling you to devote your life to His service, either in priesthood or in consecrated life".

Finally, he expressed his closeness to the many families affected by employment problems. "I think in particular of the precarious situation of Italian call centre workers", he said. "I hope that the dignity of the human person may always prevail, rather than particular interests", he emphasised.