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Presentation of the charity concert “Avrai”

This morning a press conference was held in the Holy See Press Office to present the charity concert “Avrai” (You will have), to take place tomorrow, 17 December, in the Paul VI Hall to commemorate the bicentenary of the Vatican Gendarmes Corps, featuring the Italian artist Claudio Baglioni. The proceeds will support two projects: the building of a paediatric hospital in Bangui, Central African Republic, and aid for victims of the earthquake in central Italy. The date of “Avrai”, 17 December 2016, coincides with a special occasion: the Holy Father’s eightieth birthday.

The panel was composed of Cardinal Dieudonné Nzapalainga, archbishop of Bangui, Central African Republic; Bishop Nunzio Galantino, secretary general of the Italian Episcopal Conference; Domenico Giani, commander of the Vatican Gendarmes Corps; the singer-songwriter Claudio Baglioni; and Ferdinand Salzano, delegate manager of the Friends & Partners Group.

The aim of the concert, sponsored by the O’scia Onlus Foundation, was illustrated to the Holy Father by those who collaborated in the construction of “Avrai” in a private audience, during which they also presented the first 500 thousand euros collected for the children of Bangui and for central Italy.

The event – produced by the F & P Group with the support of the SIAE (Italian Society of Authors and Publishers) and the Italian Postal Service – will be broadcast live worldwide by Rai 1, directed by Duccio Forzano, from 8.40 p.m. It will also be broadcast on Catholic channels linked with the Vatican Television Centre (CTV) and by radio, again live to listeners throughout the world, by unified networks from Vatican Radio, RTF 102.5 and the Italian Radio Zeta.

The concert will combine various musical genres and Christmas carols, translated and adapted in Italian. Claudio Baglioni will perform with a seventy-strong symphonic orchestra, with his group of ten musicians and vocalists, and with the “Giuseppe Verdi” Choir of Rome, consisting of more than seventy voices. He will be joined by the actors Isabella Ferrari, Donatella Finocchiaro, Beppe Fiorello, Vinicio Marchioni, Laura Morante, Giorgio Pasotti, Alessandro Preziosi, Gigi Proietti and Nicoletta Romanoff, who will give a voice to the words with which Pope Francis invites reflection on the journey of humanity. There will also be testimonies from the priest Don Riccardo Agresti; the lawyer Lucia Annibali, victim of an acid attack by her ex fiancé; Pietro Bartolo, a doctor from Lampedusa who has treated hundreds of refugees; and the writer Erri de Luca.

The first aim of the concert, indicated by the Holy Father, is an aid programme for the hospital of Bangui – the capital of the Central African Republic – afflicted for years by a civil war, but calmed with Pope Francis' visit in November 2015. This aid will be destined for the construction of a pavilion for paediatrics (malnutrition department), the training of medical staff, and a school of specialist training in paediatrics. All this will be implemented by the Bambino Gesù Paediatric Hospital.

The second objective is the building of a structure dedicated to children from one of the areas affected by the recent earthquake in central Italy.

In addition, from 1 to 21 December the number 45523 (Italy) will be activated for those who wish to donate funds for these projects, to be added to the donations from the afternoon of 17 December. It is possible to make a donation of two euros by sending a text message using the mobile network, or five or ten euros by calling from a landline. The St. John XXIII Foundation will be responsible for collecting funds raised in this way.
