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The Pope's video message for the "Avrai" charity concert

"Artisans of mercy ... as the works of mercy that find inspiration in God and their substance in mercy itself are modelled by the hands and hearts of men and women": thus Pope Francis defined all the professionals, from the artists to the technicians and organisers, who made possible the charity concert "Avrai" that took place yesterday evening in the Paul VI Hall. The proceeds from the concert will fund a paediatric hospital in Bangui, Central African Republic, and structures for victims of the earthquake in Central Italy. The message, the text of which is given below, was screened during the event.

"At the end of the extraordinary Jubilee, submitting the apostolic letter *Misericordia et misera*, I recalled how the culture of mercy is formed in assiduous prayer and how, to defeat the temptation of words, of theories on mercy, it is necessary to transform mercy into everyday life, life that becomes participation and sharing".

"This evening therefore broadens the horizon of the Jubilee of mercy, participating in and sharing concrete situations of poverty and need: Bangui [capital of the Central African Republic] and the areas affected by earthquakes in central Italy. This evening you are all participating in a concrete and generous way in the construction of two projects addressing the weakest and most fragile – children – projects that will be visible signs of the year of mercy, and which will bear the signature of many of you".

"At times, people ask me, 'But Father, you always speak about the poor and about mercy'. Yes, I say, but it is not a disease. It is simply the way in which God revealed Himself. Indeed, Christmas is now around the corner and reminds us of the way in which God entered the world: He was born of the Virgin Mary, like all children, wrapped in swaddling clothes, held in his mother's arms, and nursed. And not only this: He, His mother and Joseph had to face the fact there was no room for them at the inn".

"And again: the good news, the announcement of the birth was not presented to kings and princes, but to shepherds, men who received little consideration, hardened sinners, we might say. This is our God: not the totally other but the absolutely near. Therefore becoming artisans of charity and builders of mercy is like investing not in the stock market, but in paradise, in the blessed life of heaven, in the Father's love".

"Thank you all. Thank you on behalf of the children of Bangui and those of the earthquake-hit areas. We cannot

do great things or carry out large-scale projects, but what we do will have the hallmark of our passion for the Gospel”.

“Happy Christmas to you all!”
