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Pastoral visit of the Holy Father to Carpi – Visit to the Duomo of Mirandola and encounter with the populations affected by the earthquake

At 16.50 this afternoon, the Holy Father Francis visited the Cathedral of Mirandola. Upon arrival he was received by the mayor of the city, Maino Benatti, and by Don Flavio Segalina, parish priest of the Duomo.

The Pope stopped in the square in front of the entrance to the Duomo, still inaccessible due to the 2012 earthquake and addressed the following words to the populations affected by the earthquake:

The Holy Father's address

Dear brothers and sisters,

In this city of yours, still bearing visible signs of such a difficult trial, I wish to embrace you and the inhabitants of other towns struck by the earthquake in May of 2012. My venerable Predecessor, Pope Benedict XVI, came to this area a few weeks after the event to bring solidarity and his personal encouragement, and that of the entire ecclesial community. Today I am among you to confirm to you the affection of all the Church and to show to each one of you my closeness and my encouragement for the path that still lies ahead in reconstruction. I address a cordial greeting to the bishop of this Diocese, Msgr. Francesco Cavina, the parish priest and the other priests, and the mayor and other authorities. I renew my appreciation of the Civil Defence, the volunteers and all who have been involved, at different levels, in the activities of restoring structures and in the resumption of community life.

I am well aware of how much the earthquake has affected the human and cultural heritage of this land of yours. I think of the hardships you have suffered: damage to your homes, to your productive activities, to churches and other monuments, rich in history and art and a symbol of the spirituality and culture of an entire people. But I think especially of the inner wounds: the suffering of those who lost their loved ones and those who have seen the disappearance of a lifetime's sacrifices. In the days following the earthquake, your example of dignity and resourcefulness inspired great admiration in all. You have endeavoured to face with evangelical spirit the

precarious situation caused by the earthquake, recognizing and accepting in painful events the mysterious presence of a Father who is always loving even in the toughest trials. Wounds have healed, yes, they have healed. But the scars remain, and will remain for a lifetime. And looking at these scars, have the courage to grow and to raise your children in that dignity, in that fortitude, in that spirit of hope, in that courage you had at the time of the wounds.

It is my hope that the strength of heart, the hope and the qualities of industriousness that set you apart will never be lacking. Remain steadfast in your intent not to give in to discouragement before the difficulties that still remain. Indeed, much it has been done in the work of reconstruction, but strong commitment to the recovery of historical centres too is more important than ever: they are places of historical memory and essential spaces for social and ecclesial life. I am sure you will not be lacking in good will, on the part of all those involved, to ensure a rapid execution of these necessary works, for the common good.

In front of your Cathedral, a symbol of the faith and tradition of this area and seriously damaged by the earthquake, with you I raise to the Lord a fervent prayer for the victims of the earthquake, for their families and for those who continue to live in precarious situations. May the Lord make His support felt by each one of you! I wish to leave, on the altar of the Duomo, a bouquet of flowers in memory of those who left us in the earthquake.

Dear brothers and sisters, in two weeks we will celebrate the Easter of Resurrection. May the strength of the Risen Lord sustain your commitment to complete reconstruction and inspire your hope. May the Virgin Mary and your patron saints obtain from the Lord the strength for those still in difficulty; may they obtain light and strength for minds and hearts so that all your expectations can soon be fulfilled. I thank you: thank you for the example you have given to all of humanity, an example of courage, of carrying on, of dignity. I warmly impart my Blessing to you and to the entire population gathered here.

[Blessing]

And please, I ask you to pray for me. Thank you.
