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Holy See Press Office Communiqué: Pope Francis visits the Santa Lucia Foundation as part of the “Mercy Friday” initiative

Today the Holy Father left the Vatican for a surprise visit at the *Santa Lucia Foundation*, a renowned centre of excellence in Rome specialising in the rehabilitation of patients with motor and cognitive impairments, where pathologies linked to stroke, medullary lesions, Parkinson’s disease and multiple sclerosis are treated.

The Pope thus continues the experience of the “Mercy Fridays”, gestures of closeness and support dedicated to those who are less fortunate, which characterised the Jubilee of Mercy.

At around 16.00, Pope Francis passed through the gate in Via Ardeatina 306 and was welcomed with joy by the people then present in the hospital complex car park.

Immediately afterwards, the Pope was received by the President of the Association, Dr. Maria Adriana Amadio, and the Director General Dr. Edoardo Alesse, as well as by the staff who joined the small group visiting the Centre.

The Pope’s visit to the ward for children affected by neurological pathologies was particularly moving. Pope Francis stayed and joked with them; he then exchanged some words of comfort with the parents who were assisting in the motor rehabilitation of their children, an often demanding and painful process. The Holy Father observed attentively the exercises that enable the children to acquire or regain motor stability.

The Pope then visited the department for patients between the ages of 15 and 25, with tetraplegia and paraplegia, some as a result of road traffic accidents, and the gymnasium where the elderly were carrying out activities for motor rehabilitation.

The Pope encouraged all those present to carry out their physical exercises and underlined how important it is to hope in the future and to trust in scientific research which allows great progress to be made in this field.

After his visit to the Chapel in the building, the Holy Father returned to Santa Marta.