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## Pastoral visit to the Roman parish of San Giulio in Monteverde

This afternoon, the Holy Father Francis paid a pastoral visit to the Roman parish of *San Giulio in Monteverde*, in the west sector of the diocese of Rome, upon the conclusion of the consolidation works following the collapse of a floor, which led the parish community to spend three years based in a temporary structure.

Before arrival at the parish of San Giulio, the Pope greeted some residents from the nearby "Città di Roma" nursing home who had gathered to greet the Holy Father as he passed in the car.

Upon his arrival in the Roman parish, the Holy Father was received by the cardinal vicar Angelo De Donatis, by the auxiliary bishop of the West Sector, HE. Msgr. Paolo Selvadagi, by the parish priest, Fr. Dario Frattini and by Fr. Rinaldo Guarisco, superior general of the Regular Canons of the Immaculate Conception, who manage the parish.

Before Holy Mass, Pope Francis met with the sick and the elderly in a ground floor room and, after proceeding to the upper floor, in the rectory, he greeted those who had contributed to the creation of the living nativity scene, set up by the faithful of San Giulio in Porta Asinaria with the aim of raising funds for the consolidation works. Subsequently the Holy Father met with newlyweds and those currently attending marriage preparation courses; he then greeted the volunteers and those assisted by Caritas, including some homeless people welcomed by the parish during the period of cold weather. Immediately afterwards, in the oratory, the Pope met the members of the religious buildings office of the Vicariate of Rome, with the company that had carried out the reconstruction and consolidation work, and all the workers. The Holy Father then went to the temporary tensile structure that had accommodated the faithful during the construction work, where the children and young people who are preparing for Communion and Confirmation were waiting for him, along with the families of the children who received or are about to receive baptism. The Pope answered some questions the young people addressed to him. Finally he greeted the priests of the community and administered the Sacrament of Reconciliation to three young men and a mother.

At 17.40, the Holy Father presided at the celebration of Holy Mass in the renovated parish church, with the rite of the dedication of the altar. Before the final blessing, the parish priest, Fr. Dario Frattini, addressed some words of thanks to the Holy Father for his visit. The Pope then returned to the Vatican.

Speaking with the sick and elderly, who had dedicated a poem to him and had said that they were happy that Peter had visited them, the Pope said he had wanted to do what Jesus had asked of Peter: “to confirm”. “To confirm brothers in faith, in hope, in charity. And yes, there is old age, and there is disease, there are so many problems, but there is Jesus. And Jesus never disappoints... And Jesus says, ‘I too know what suffering is’. All the complaints we may make to Jesus, He transforms into a prayer and presents them to the Father, because He went through all this before us”.

Among the questions asked by the young people of the parish, there was the matter of whether he had also had doubts about his journey of faith, and if so, how he had resolved them. “All men, women and children, at some point, have doubts”, he replied. “Doubt is part of life. And to doubt a bit is to put God to the test: if it is true that He is faithful, if it is true that He is listening to us. ‘Lord, why?’ In moments like these we have to place our stake on one thing: Jesus’ fidelity. Jesus is faithful, totally faithful. His is a fidelity that never disappoints, before or after the Lord makes Himself heard. Do not be afraid of doubt”.

“And I have had doubts. Faced with calamities, but also with things that have happened to me in life. How did I manage to come out of it? I don’t think I came out of it alone, you can never leave doubt by yourself. It takes the company of someone to help you move forward, and that is why it is important always to be in a group, together, with friends... You can never do it alone. ... It also helps us to talk about our doubts with parents or friends, or with a catechist... but always speak to someone. And then talk about your doubts with Jesus. At times I have heard people say, ‘I don’t speak with Jesus because He has destroyed my life’. ‘I am angry with Jesus’. But even getting angry with Jesus can be a way of praying, it is like saying to Jesus, ‘Look at this, it makes me angry’. Jesus likes to see the truth of our hearts. Do not pretend in front of Jesus”.

To the group of the Living Nativity, the Pope revealed that he had greatly liked a book by the bishop of Chieti, Italy, entitled “The living Nativity, the living Gospel”. “Think that Saint Francis too evangelized in this way only: seeing Jesus, imitating Jesus, imitating the Virgin, imitating Saint Joseph, imitating the simplicity of those pastors, not imitating Herod... Continue in this way. Thank you”.

In this regard, the Holy Father gave the news that this year, with the Pontifical Council for New Evangelization, a day or week will be dedicated to the Nativity, to inspire people to follow this tradition in their homes and in the squares.

In his encounter with newlyweds, he underlined the importance of preparation for marriage, which is “a path, a catechumenate”. “When adults wish to be baptized”, he explained, “they must learn the doctrine, they must follow an itinerary with the community. Marriage is the same, it is a catechumenate. The preparation involves not only knowing something about marriage, but rather living it with the community, it is listening to the experience of other people, sharing doubts. And the catechumenate must not end here. It is very important for it to continue after the wedding and to accompany the first years of marriage”.

“I would say only two things. The first: for married life, there are three key words: perhaps you know them but you must learn them with the mind and with the heart. “Please”, “Thank you”, and “I am sorry”. Always ask permission of your husband or wife, do not be intrusive, there are two of us... Say thank you, give thanks, always. And “I am sorry”. Have the humility to say: yes, I made a mistake, forgive me. That is it, and the story ends. Otherwise, if we do not say this third word, it goes on, and on, and on. And the second thing: in normal marriages you fight. Do not be afraid to quarrel. But there is something very important. Do not end the day without making peace, because the cold war of the day after is the woodworm that begins to eat away at a marriage.

Finally, the Holy Father spoke with the Caritas volunteers, who updated him on their initiatives, which include, besides receiving homeless people, the donation of blood and help to mothers-to-be in difficulty, a project for hosting families with children who are patients in the oncology ward of the nearby Bambin Gesù hospital. “With this list”, said the parish representative, “we hope we not have given the impression of being a ‘charity supermarket’, a phrase used by the director of diocesan Caritas to indicate that the parish is not a place where one enters, chooses something and leaves”.

“I would say that there are three signs that show if a parish works”, the Pope answered. “The first is prayer, when people pray: a parish that prays, where people come to pray, and where they also pray at home. This is the first sign ... and it is one of the things that prevents you from becoming that ‘supermarket’ we spoke about. The second is the charity of deeds: taking care of the needs of our brothers ... of families. Also hidden needs, which are not shown out of shame, but which exist, and of which there are many. That is the second signal. And the third is passive charity. What does passive charity mean? That you love and do not criticize each other. Gossip is a very serious disease and when it is in a parish, it means that parish does not work”.

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