



Fridays of Mercy – Pope Francis visits the young women received by the John XXIII Community

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August's Friday of Mercy saw Pope Francis go to a neighborhood in the peripheries of Rome, where he visited a condominium complex that houses a rehabilitation program for young women run by the John XXIII Community founded by Father Benzi.

The visit was a true surprise for the 20 young women. When they opened the door of the private apartment, the last thing they expected was to see Pope Francis. The Pope had a friendly talk with them for more than one hour, listening to their sad experiences. He encouraged them to look forward with much faith. It was a time of special attention from the Pope for this representative group of women, whose average age is 30, and who come from Romania, Nigeria, Ukraine, Albania, and Italy. Also present at the meeting were Giovanni Paolo Ramonda, the national head of the John XXIII Community; Father Aldo Bonaiuto, its chaplain, and some of the community's workers.

In the midst of vacation time, when everyone tends to focus on entertainment, often not mindful of rules, the sign given by Pope Francis is that of wanting to restore complete dignity to these young women who have suffered forceful aggression, oppression, and intimidation from the prostitution racket.

With this gesture, Pope Francis wished to reaffirm that Mercy is not an abstract word, but rather a concrete action with which you involve yourself even in social issues in order to restore the dignity of those subjected to new forms of slavery.