



The Fridays of Mercy of Pope Francis

Pope Francis visits two hospital facilities to underscore the importance of life from its beginning to its natural end



Pope Francis continued the “Fridays of Mercy” this afternoon. Not many days after the canonization of Mother Teresa, who devoted a great amount of service on behalf of life, **Pope Francis visited two facilities that are very significant from this viewpoint.**

The first was the **emergency room** and the **neonatal department of the Hospital of Saint John (Ospedale San Giovanni) of Rome**, where, at present, about 12 babies with various neonatal illnesses are hospitalized. Five of the babies are in very grave condition and are intubated in intensive care; among these are a set of twins. On the upper floor of the department, there is a nursery where other babies are hospitalized.

There was great surprise among all of the staff, who never expected to see Pope Francis when they responded to the ring of the intercom and opened the door. Even the Pope had to put on a mask and go through the usual hygienic precautions necessary for sterile environments as he entered the department. The Pope paused in front of every incubator, and he greeted all of the parents who were present, giving them comfort and courage.

After he left the Hospital of Saint John of Rome, the Holy Father went to the **“Villa Speranza” (House of Hope) hospice** where 30 patients with terminal diseases are staying. The facility belongs to the Gemelli Foundation of the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart.

When he arrived, since no one was expecting to see Pope Francis, the administrators first welcomed the Pope, and then he asked to visit all the patients in their rooms. There was great surprise from everyone, both the patients and their relatives; they were moments with intense emotions, along with tears and smiles of joy.

The Holy Father wanted to present a strong message about the importance of life, from its first instant to its natural end. The importance of welcoming life and of guaranteeing its dignity in every moment of its development is a teaching that Pope Francis has emphasized many times. With this double visit he has, in a concrete and tangible way, impressed on the public how fundamental it is for mercy to include attention to those in the most weak and precarious of conditions.