

Mozambique, pope Francis' visit at the DREAM centre of the Community of Sant'egidio in Zimpeto

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I am grateful for your warm and fraternal welcome and I thank Cacilda for her kind words. Thank you too, for your lives and witness, which show that this multi-purpose health centre – Santo Egídio de Zimpeto - is a sign of the love of God, who is ever ready to bring life and hope wherever death and suffering abound.

I cordially greet the director, the healthcare workers, the patients and their families, and all those present. Seeing the competence, professionalism and love with which you receive and care for so many suffering persons, particularly patients with HIV-AIDS, and especially mothers and children, makes me think of the parable of the Good Shepherd.

All those who come here, with despair and anguish, are like the man lying on the side of the road. Those of you here have refused to walk by or continue on your way like others (the Levite and the priest). This Centre shows us that there are always people ready to stop and show compassion, who do not yield to the temptation to say “There is nothing to be done” or “It’s impossible to fight this scourge”. Instead, you have set about finding solutions. As Cacilda mentioned, you have heeded the silent, almost inaudible, cry of countless women, so many of them living in shame, marginalized and judged by all. That is why you opened this house, where the Lord lives with those lying on the side of the road – to those suffering from cancer or tuberculosis, and to hundreds of the malnourished, especially children and young people.

All of you who in various ways are part of this healthcare community thus become a sign of the heart of Jesus, so that no one will think “that his or her cry has gone unheard”. You are “a sign of sharing with those in need, and you enable them to sense the active presence of a brother or a sister. The poor do not need intermediaries, but the personal involvement of all those who hear their cry. The concern of believers in their regard cannot be limited to a kind of assistance – as useful and as providential as this may be in the beginning – but requires a loving attentiveness that honours the person as such and seeks out his or her best interests” (*Message for the 2018 World Day of the Poor*, 18 November 2018, 3). Hearing this cry has made you realize that medical treatment, however necessary, is not enough. So you deal with the problem in its entirety, restoring dignity to women and children, and helping to point them towards a better future.

In this immense enterprise, thanks to your continual “listening” you too have come to experience your limitations and overall lack of means. The programme that you have set in place, which connects you with other places in the world, is an example both of humility, in recognition of your limits, and of creativity, since you are now part of a larger network. “Often our cooperation with other initiatives inspired not by faith but by human solidarity, make it possible for us to provide help that otherwise we would have been unable to offer. The realization that, in the face of so much poverty, our capacity for action is limited, weak and insufficient, leads us to reach out to others so that, through mutual cooperation, we can attain our goals all the more effectively. We Christians are inspired by faith and by the imperative of charity, but we can also acknowledge other forms of assistance and solidarity that aim in part for the same goals... Dialogue between different experiences, and humility in offering our cooperation without seeking the limelight, is a fitting and completely evangelical response that we can give” (*ibid.*, 7). The free and voluntary commitment of so many persons in different fields – dermatology, internal medicine, neurology and radiology, among others: over five thousand doctors, nurses, biologists coordinators and technicians – who, for many years now, through telemedicine, have generously cooperated to train local operators, has enormous human and evangelical value.

At the same time, it is wonderful to see how this “listening” to the most vulnerable of the poor, the sick, puts us in contact with another part of our vulnerable world. I think of the “symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life... the earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor; she ‘groans in travail’ (*Rom 8:22*)” (*Laudato Si*, 2). In the sculptures of Makonde art, the *ujamaa* (Swahili for “extended family” or “tree of life”), in which various figures cling to one another and where unity and solidarity prevail over the individual, helps us to see that we all come from the same stock. You have recognized this and your listening is leading you to find sustainable means in the search for energy and for gathering and storing supplies of water. Your concern for low environmental impact is a virtuous model, an example to be followed, in the light of the urgent situation created by the deterioration of our planet.

The parable of the Good Samaritan ends with his bringing the wounded man to an inn and entrusting the innkeeper with part of the expenses and a promise to pay the remainder upon his return. Women like Cacilda, the approximately 100,000 children who can write a new page of history free of HIV-AIDS, and all those nameless persons who today smile because they have been cured with dignity in their dignity, are part of the payment that the Lord has left with you. Having emerged from the nightmare of suffering, and without concealing their condition, they are now a sign of hope for many persons. Their willingness to dream can serve as an inspiration to many people lying on the wayside who need a welcoming hand. For your part, you will be repaid by the Lord “when he returns”, and this should fill you with joy. As we leave this place, as you return to your daily tasks, where no one praises or applauds you, keep receiving those who come to you, go out and look for the wounded and helpless in the peripheries... Let us not forget that their names are written in heaven with the inscription: “These are the blessed of my Father”. Renew your efforts to ensure that this hospital will always be a place that gives birth to hope.

May God bless you, dear patients and family members, and all those who assist you with such great love and who encourage you to persevere.