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Audience with members of the “Village de François”

This morning, in the Clementine Hall of the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the members of the “Village de François”, to whom he addressed the following words:

Address of the Holy Father

Dear friends,

I am pleased to welcome you, the inhabitants and participants of the *Village de François*. When Étienne Villemain, the *enfant terrible*, who brought this project together with so many other people, first told me about it, I could not help but tell him that I was wary of what the Holy Spirit might be able to inspire in him... And now I am happy to see that the project is going ahead! The *Village de François* is an ecclesial place that goes out of the usual framework, that proposes something else; it is the Church as a “field hospital”, concerned more with those who suffer than with defending its own interests, running the risk of the new in order to be more faithful to the Gospel.

The definition of the world as a “village” has become a cliché: the accelerated development of means of transport and communication and social networks suggest that we have all become closer to one another. Yet, so many people are left on the margins of this so-called village, reserved for a privileged elite. I hope that the *Village de François* may contribute to a rediscovery of what a true village is: a fabric of concrete human relations, in mutual support, caring for those in need, the coexistence of generations and the concern to respect the Creation that surrounds us.

Indeed, the *Village de François* was conceived on the basis of the conviction that “everything is linked”, and you experience this concretely by associating the environment and respect for human life from conception to natural death, prayer and fraternity, and also by bringing different generations together. I count on your testimony to show that life according to the Gospel is found in the balanced consideration of all these aspects. We often tend to mobilize ourselves with great enthusiasm for very legitimate causes, but losing sight of the bigger picture.

Concrete experience shows us, however, that it is the human person as a whole that needs to be loved, accompanied and included in a network of enriching and constructive relationships.

Such relationships, and I will conclude with this, have an absolute model, a source from which they can develop. You have settled in an ancient Trappist abbey: I see in this a call for you to place at the centre of your experience, in addition to a simple and laborious life, the care and development of the inner life, the relationship with Jesus Christ, who alone can fill our parched hearts. In the Gospel according to Saint John, He says: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life" (14:6). He himself experienced, in person, what you realize in the *Village de François*: he was fragile, in his mother's arms and on the cross; he worked as a craftsman; he lived in the rhythm of the seasons and of nature; he grew up in a village where generations mingled; he prayed, forgave and loved his neighbour. To you I entrust him as a model and an inspiration in your project and your daily life.

May my prayer accompany you on this demanding, yet joyful and liberating path. Thank you for listening and, please, do not forget to pray for me. Thank you.
