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Apostolic Journey of Pope Francis in Hungary (28 to 30 April 2023) – Private visit to children of the Blessed László Batthyány-Strattmann Institute, Meeting with the poor and refugees at the Church of Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, and Visit to the Greek-Catholic Community

Private visit to children of the *Blessed László Batthyány-Strattmann* Institute

Meeting with the poor and refugees at the Church of Saint Elizabeth of Hungary

Visit to the Greek-Catholic Community at the Church of the *Protection of the Mother of God*

Private visit to children of the *Blessed László Batthyány-Strattmann* Institute

At 8.30 this morning, after celebrating Holy Mass in private, the Holy Father Francis left the Apostolic Nunciature of Budapest and transferred by car to the *Blessed László Batthyány-Strattmann* Institute.

Upon arrival, at 8.36, the Pope was received at the main entrance by the Director Gyögy Inotay, who, while they proceeded to the refectory, showed the Holy Father some of the rooms in the structure.

The Director then addressed a brief welcome greeting to the Holy Father, followed by the singing of the *Ave Maria*, the performance of a musical piece for the flute by a girl, the singing of the *Hymn to Charity* and the hymn of thanksgiving.

After the exchange of gifts, the recitation of the Lord's prayer and the final blessing, before leaving the Institute, the Director accompanied the Pope to the Hall of Labours, on the ground floor, where he met with and briefly greeted the employees of the Institute.

At the end of the visit, the Holy Father transferred by car to the Church of Saint Elizabeth of Hungary for the meeting with the poor and refugees.

Along the way, as he left the Institute, the Pope stopped to greet a group of around one hundred children and young people of a nearby parish dedicated to Saint Laszlo, who awaited him along the street with prayers and hymns. Some inhabitants of the area were present alongside them.

The following is the Pope's impromptu greeting to those present during the visit:

Impromptu greeting of the Holy Father

Many thanks to you all for your welcome and your tenderness. Thank you for your hymns, your gestures, your eyes. Thank you, Mr. Director, for wanting to begin this act with the prayer of Saint Francis, which is a plan for life. Because the Saint always asks for the grace that where *there is nothing I can do something*, when *something is lacking I can do something*. In a journey from reality, as it is, carry it forward, make that reality go forward. And this is the pure Gospel. Jesus came to take reality as it was and to carry it forward. It would have been easier to take ideas, ideologies, and go forward with them without taking reality into account. This is the evangelical path, it is the path of Jesus. And this is what you, Mr. Director, wished to express with the prayer of Saint Francis. Thank you. And thank you to you all!

Meeting with the poor and refugees at the Church of Saint Elizabeth of Hungary

At 9.19 this morning, after leaving the Beato László Batthyány-Strattmann Institute, the Holy Father Francis travelled by car to the Church of Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, where the meeting with the poor and refugees took place.

Upon arrival the Pope was received at the entrance of the Church by the president of Caritas Hungary, and the parish priest, who brought him the cross and holy water for aspersion. Then they proceeded along the central nave together, up to the altar, while the choir sang a hymn.

After the words of welcome from the President of Caritas Hungary, Bishop Antal Spányi of Székesfehérvár, a Greek-Catholic family, a family of refugees from Ukraine and a deacon and his wife gave their testimonies. Pope Francis then delivered his address.

According to the local authorities, around 600 people were present inside the Church, and around 1000 people in the adjacent square.

At the end, after the recitation of the Lord's prayer, the blessing and the final hymn by a Roma group, the Holy Father left the Church of Saint Elizabeth of Hungary and went to the Greek-Catholic Church of the Protection of the Mother of God of Budapest for the visit to the Greek-Catholic community.

The following is the Pope's address to those present during the meeting:

Address of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

I am happy to be here with you. Thank you, Bishop Antal, for your words of welcome, and for describing the generous service that the Hungarian Church carries out for and with the poor. Those in need – let us never

forget – are at the heart of the Gospel, for Jesus came among us “to bring glad tidings to the poor” (Lk 4:18). The poor, then, present us with a great challenge: we must refuse to let the faith we profess be imprisoned by a piety removed from life, one that results in a kind of “spiritual egotism”, a spirituality of my own creation that serves to preserve my own inner tranquillity and complacency. Genuine faith is challenging, it takes risks, it leads us to encounter the poor and, by the witness of our lives, to speak *the language of charity*. Saint Paul tells us that we may speak in many tongues and possess great wisdom and wealth, but if we lack charity, we have nothing and we are nothing (cf. 1 Cor 13:1-13).

The language of charity. This was the language spoken by Saint Elizabeth, to whom the Hungarian people have great devotion and affection. Upon my arrival this morning, I saw her statue in the square, with its base that shows her receiving the cord of the Franciscan order and giving water to quench a poor man’s thirst. This is an eloquent image of faith: those who “bind themselves to God”, like Saint Francis of Assisi, who was an inspiration to Saint Elizabeth, become charitable to the poor. For “if anyone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen” (1 Jn 4:20). Saint Elizabeth, the daughter of a king, had grown up in the comfort of a life at court, in a luxurious and privileged environment. Yet once she was touched and transformed by her encounter with Christ, she felt repelled by worldly riches and vanities, and sought to renounce them and to care for those in need. Thus, she not only sold her possessions but also spent her life serving the poor, lepers and the sick, personally caring for them, even carrying them on her own shoulders. That is the language of charity.

Brigitta spoke to us about this, and I thank her for her witness. She told us of her many privations, her struggles and her hard work to try to get by and to keep her children from going hungry. Then, at the most devastating moment, the Lord came to her aid. She told us how the Lord intervenes. He who hears the cry of the poor, who “secures justice for the oppressed, who gives bread to the hungry” and “raises up those who are bowed down”, almost never intervenes by solving our problems from on high. Rather he draws near to us with the embrace of his tender love, inspiring compassion in our brothers and sisters who take notice and choose not to remain indifferent. As Brigitta mentioned, she was able to experience the Lord’s closeness thanks to the Greek Catholic Church, to so many people who did their best to help her, to encourage her, to find her a job and support her in both her material needs and her journey of faith. That is the kind of witness we are asked to give: showing compassion toward all, especially those experiencing poverty, illness and pain; compassion, which means “to suffer with”. We need a Church that is fluent in the language of charity, that universal language which everyone can hear and understand, even those farthest from us, even those who are not believers.

Here I wish to express my gratitude to the Church in Hungary for its generous and wide-ranging service to charity. You have built up a network that links pastoral workers, volunteers, parish and diocesan Caritas organizations, while also engaging prayer groups, communities of believers, and organizations belonging to other confessions, yet united in the ecumenical fellowship that is born of charity. Thank you too, for having welcomed – not only with generosity but also with enthusiasm – so many refugees from Ukraine. I was moved as I listened to the testimony of Oleg and his family. Their “journey to the future” – a different future, far from the horrors of war – actually began with a “journey of memory”, because Oleg remembered the warm welcome he received in Hungary years ago, when he came to work here as a cook. The memory of that experience encouraged him to take his family and come here to Budapest, where he met with generous hospitality. The memory of love received rekindles hope and inspires people to embark upon a new journey in life. Even amid pain and suffering, once we have received the balm of love, we find the courage needed to keep moving forward: we find the strength to believe that all is not lost, and that a different future is possible. The love that Jesus gives us and commands us to practise can help to uproot the evils of selfishness and of the scourge of indifference from society, from our cities and the places where we live, and to rekindle hope for a new, more just and fraternal world, where all can feel at home.

Sadly, many people, even here, are literally homeless. Many of our more vulnerable sisters and brothers – living alone, struggling with various physical and mental disabilities, devastated by the poison of drugs, released from prison or abandoned because they are elderly – are experiencing severe material, cultural and spiritual poverty; they have no roof over their heads and no home in which to live. Zoltán and his wife Anna offered us their testimony about this immense problem – thank you for your words! Thank you too, for responding to the prompting of the Holy Spirit, which led you with courage and generosity to build a centre to take in the homeless.

I was moved to hear that, together with their material needs, you are attentive to their personal stories and their wounded dignity, caring for them in their loneliness and their struggle to feel loved and welcomed in the world. Anna told us that, “Jesus, the living Word, heals their hearts and relationships, because people are rebuilt from within”; once they realize that in God’s eyes they are beloved and blessed, they are reborn. This is a lesson for the whole Church: it is not enough to provide bread to fill stomachs; we need to fill people’s hearts! Charity is much more than material and social assistance. It has to do with the whole person; it strives to put people back on their feet with the love of Jesus: a love that helps them to recover their beauty and their dignity.

Offering charity means having the courage to look into people’s eyes. We cannot help others while looking away. To be charitable requires the courage to touch: we cannot give alms at a distance, without touching. To touch and to look. In this way, by touching and looking, we begin to journey with those in need. And this makes us realize how much we ourselves need the Lord’s gaze and touch.

Brothers and sisters, I encourage you always to speak the language of charity. The statue in this square represents the most famous miracle of Saint Elizabeth: we are told that the Lord once turned the loaves of bread she was carrying to the needy into so many roses. This is also the case for you: whenever you strive to offer bread to the hungry, the Lord makes joy blossom within you and infuses your life with the fragrance of the gift of love that you give. Brothers and sisters, my hope and prayer, then, is that you will always spread the fragrance of charity in the Church and in your country. I ask you, please, to continue to pray for me. Thank you.

Visit to the Greek-Catholic Community at the Church of the *Protection of the Mother of God*

At the end of the meeting with the poor and refugees at the Church of Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, the Holy Father Francis met with the Greek-Catholic community at the Church of the Protection of the Mother of God.

Upon arrival, the Pope was welcomed at the entrance of the Greek-Catholic church of Budapest by Archbishop Fülöp Kocsis, metropolitan of the eparchy of Hajdúdorog for Catholics of Byzantine rite. They then went before the Iconostasi, while the choir sang a hymn.

The greeting from the metropolitan archbishop was followed by a moment of prayer with the community. The meeting concluded with the blessing and the final hymn.

At the end of the visit to the Greek-Catholic community, the Holy Father transferred by car to the Apostolic Nunciature of Budapest. Upon arrival, Pope Francis received Metropolitan Hilarion of Budapest and Hungary. The meeting, which was cordial in tone, lasted around twenty minutes.
