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OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE SALA DE IMPRENSA DA SANTA SÉ
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N. 170519c

Friday 19.05.2017

Holy See Press Office communiqué: Holy Father in Ostia for Easter blessing of families

The Holy Father Francis wished to follow up the “Mercy Friday” initiative, signs inspired by the corporal and spiritual works of mercy that the Pope performed during the Jubilee, also in the month of May.

This afternoon the Pope left the Vatican, bound for Ostia. As a sign of closeness to the families resident in the outskirts of Rome, he decided to bless their homes, house by house, just as the parish priest does every year during the Easter period.

Two days ago, Don Plinio Poncina, parish priest of Stella Maris, one of the six parishes of Ostia, had attached the usual notice on the door of the apartment buildings, informing the families that he would pass by for the regular Easter blessing.

It was a great surprise today when, instead of the parish priest, it was Pope Francis who rang the doorbell.

The Pope “became a parish priest”: with great simplicity he stayed a while with the families, and blessed around a dozen apartments of the condominium of Piazza Francesco Conteduca 11, leaving the gift of a rosary. He jokingly apologized for the disturbance, assuring the residents that he would however have respected the period of silence during which they rest after lunch, as requested on the sign attached to the door.

Although Ostia forms part of the territory of the Municipality of Rome, it constitutes an independent nucleus with approximately 100,000 inhabitants. It contains a lively community of faithful, who often experience and share certain difficulties linked to suburban life. The church, parish and small adjacent sports field often serve as a point of reference for the community and offer a welcome to those who are typically excluded, socially and existentially, and who therefore remain marginal.