
Two projects of the Coptic Catholic Church for disadvantaged children. Msgr. Gaid: “A fruit of the Abu Dhabi Document”

The Cairo-based [Bambino Gesù non-profit association](#) was inaugurated on 21 July 2020 in Rome, at the embassy of the United Arab Emirates in Italy. It was founded by Msgr. **Yoannis Lahzi Gaid**, an Egyptian Coptic Catholic priest, who also chairs the Association whose purpose is to implement two major projects in the New Administrative Capital of Egypt, 45 km east of the current capital Cairo, covering an area of 700 square kilometres: the **Oasis of Mercy Orphanage** and the **Bambino Gesù Women's and Children's Hospital**. These two projects, Msgr. Gaid told SIR, have been “conceived by the Coptic Catholic Church in Egypt. They are the fruits of the [Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together](#), signed by Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Ahmed al-Tayyeb, on 4 February 2019 in Abu Dhabi”, at the presence of the young prelate who at the time served as Personal Secretary of His



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will be read during the ceremony. “**The first stone of the orphanage was laid in August last year,**” the prelate explained. “We have now completed 60 per cent of the construction works, due to end in 2022, but this naturally depends on the funding expected to be forthcoming. The construction of the hospital will start in August. The preliminary stages and the executive project have been completed: it took a year to obtain all the necessary authorisations.” “Procedures were extremely complex”, since it is a hospital. “The internationally oriented project, supervised by the Bambino Gesù paediatric hospital in Rome, was developed in compliance with international standards and in accordance with Egyptian regulations.” **Mariella Enoc**, president of the Bambino Gesù in Rome, is at the head of the scientific committee overseeing the realisation of the project. The hospital in Cairo will be closely collaborating with the Bambino Gesù hospital in Rome, following a memorandum of understanding establishing cooperation in the area of medical care and continued clinical and specialized medical training.



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Going into the details, Msgr. Gaid explained that *the orphanage was created to provide a home, regardless of religious affiliation, to the numerous orphaned or abandoned children living on the streets of Cairo, without birth certificates or documents, who face diseases, exploitation, abuse and violence of all kinds every day.* The Oasis, owned by the Coptic Catholic Church, will accommodate them to offer them protection, education, schooling and a peaceful environment. A statue of Blessed Charles Acutis, blessed by the Holy Father on March 17, will be erected in the chapel. "We don't expect to solve the problem," said Msgr. Gaid, "but we can't just stay on the sidelines. We can accommodate up to a total of 200 minors; to them at least we want to offer them a true opportunity for human, spiritual, social and professional growth" so as to accompany them towards independence and help them "become proactive persons." To this end, it is essential for the young guests to feel at home, members of a family. They will be thus be divided into small groups of six and entrusted to a young couple or to an educator. In this way, despite sharing the same facility,

the children will enjoy the warmth of a real home".



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However, since in all likelihood the children will be needing medical care, a flagship paediatric healthcare centre will provide basic and advanced medical care for all children who should need it, as well as health assistance and support to expectant mothers in a context characterised by a high birth rate but also by a high rate of neonatal, infant and maternal mortality. Women will be cared for from the moment of conception throughout their pregnancy, during delivery and after childbirth, until discharge from the hospital, which aims to be

a paediatric centre of excellence leading the way in cutting-edge technology in the region and connected to the Bambino Gesù Hospital in Rome.

Name and logo. The name of the Association, orphanage and hospital was inspired by the donation of a replica of Michelangelo's Pietà statue by Pope Francis, "autographed" by the Pontiff. Since these initiatives are intended for children, it was decided to replace in the logo the body of Christ deposed from the Cross with the image of the infant Jesus. *"The two projects reflect the spirit of the Abu Dhabi Document. However, it should be said that the educational and medical facilities of the Coptic Catholic Church in Egypt have historically been open to all in the name of universal human fraternity."*

[". For Egypt to be a gateway to hope, unity and the future, the orphanage and the hospital will require the generosity of many donors to support them via a bank transfer to the Bambino Gesù Association of Cairo Onlus – please find the details below.](#)

[Giovanna Pasqualin Traversa](#)