



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE
BOLLETTINO

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BIURO PRASOWE STOLICY APOSTOLSKIEJ دار الصحافة التابعة للكرسي الرسولي

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Audience with the artists of the Vatican Christmas Concert

At midday today, in the Clementine Hall of the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the promoters, organizers and artists of the Vatican Christmas Concert, which will take place tomorrow, Saturday 15 December, in the Paul VI Hall, promoted by the Congregation for Catholic Education. The proceeds of the event will be donated to the Pontifical *Scholas Occurrentes* Foundation, and the Salesian *Missioni Don Bosco* Foundation.

The following is the Holy Father's greeting to those present:

Greeting of the Holy Father

Dear friends,

We are preparing for the celebration of Christmas. The event of the birth of Jesus, two thousand years ago, occurs in a precise cultural context. Today, Christmas is celebrated in all parts of the world and is manifested according to the most diverse customs and traditions, generating multiple representations, to which you artists contribute with your talents and your passion.

Christmas is always new, as it invites us to be reborn in faith, to open ourselves to hope, to rekindle charity. This year, in particular, it calls us to reflect on the situation of many men, women and children of our time - migrants, refugees and refugees – on the move to escape wars, miseries caused by social injustices and climate change. To leave everything – home, relatives, homeland – and face the unknown, one must have suffered a very difficult situation.

Jesus too came “from another place”. He dwelt in God the Father, with the Holy Spirit, in a communion of wisdom, light and love, which He wanted to bring us with His coming into the world. He came to dwell among us, in the midst of our limits and our sins, to give us the love of the Most Holy Trinity. And as a man He showed us the “way” of love: namely, service, with humility, to give life.

When Herod's violent rage struck the territory of Bethlehem, the Holy Family of Nazareth experienced the anguish of persecution and, guided by God, took refuge in Egypt. The little Jesus reminds us that half the refugees in the world today are children, innocent victims of human injustice.

The Church responds to these dramas with many initiatives of solidarity and assistance, hospitality and welcome. There is always much to do, there are so many suffering to soothe and problems to be solved. We need greater coordination, more organized actions, able to embrace every person, group and community, according to the plan of fraternity that unites us all. This is why it is necessary to *network*.

Creating networks of education, first of all, to educate the little ones among migrants, that is, those who instead of sitting among the school desks, like many of their peers, spend their days making long journeys on foot, or on makeshift and dangerous vehicles. They too need training to be able to work tomorrow and to participate as citizens, aware of the common good. And at the same time it is a question of educating us all in acceptance and solidarity, to prevent migrants and refugees from encountering indifference or, worse, intolerance, on their path.

Creating networks of education means allowing people to get up on their feet, to get back on their feet with full dignity, with the strength and courage to face life, making the most of their talents and their hard work.

Creating networks of education is a valid solution for opening the gates of refugee camps, to allow young migrants to enter new societies, encountering and in turn promoting solidarity and generosity.

I thank the *Missioni Don Bosco* project in Uganda and that of *Scholas Occurrentes* in Iraq, because they have collected this call to "network with education", cooperating in the transmission of the message of hope for Christmas.

The Church's mission has always manifested itself through the creativity and genius of artists, because they, with their works, are able to reach the most intimate aspects of the conscience of men and women of every age. For this, to you here present, I thank you and encourage you to continue in your work, to enkindle in every heart the warmth and tenderness of Christmas. Thank you, and I wish you a good concert!
