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Audience with participants in the “Christmas Contest”

This morning, in the Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the participants in the “Christmas Contest”, to whom he delivered the following address:

Address of the Holy Father

Dear friends, welcome!

I greet all of you, young musicians participating in the Christmas Contest 2023, organizers, accompanists and benefactors, with joy. I am happy about this initiative, which aims to invest in education to give young people and their creativity a voice. I also express my gratitude to the Dicastery for Culture and Education, the *Gravissimum Educationis* Foundation and the Republic of San Marino for their fruitful cooperation in the realization of the event, as well as to the promoters of the associated project “Good makes news”, which during the summer offered an important training opportunity to young people from faraway countries at the Dicastery for Communication.

Dear young people, you are composers! And composition is a demanding art, that requires on the one hand, knowledge of music with its rules and its language, and on the other, the capacity to give voice to the questions, the inspirations and the desires of the heart. It is an art that requires, in two words, *harmony* and *creativity*, which go together. In this sense, we can say that composing music is a metaphor for life, in which we need both to synchronize harmoniously with others, with society and its rules, and to give space to the originality of each person’s way of being and expressing oneself.

Harmony and creativity. They are not in conflict: in fact, the search for harmony, which requires commitment, dedication and constancy, in music as in life, does not humiliate, but liberates the uniqueness of each one, offering the artist the tools to communicate in a way that is comprehensible to others, so as to become a constructive gift for the joy of all. Therefore, a first thank you goes precisely to your commitment to studying the harmonic art of music, which involves effort and many hours of practice!

At the same time, however, what the artist shares in each of his works speaks of unique, personal and intimate feelings. Thus, in the compositions you submit for the Contest, behind each of the works you have offered, you give us the opportunity to encounter you in a unique moment, that of inspiration, which is all your own, but which you wanted to share: a flicker of light, a tremor of love, a glimpse of blue in the sky of life, a jolt of amazement in the face of beauty, or perhaps a twinge of pain or a cry of protest, which appeared in your heart and to which you gave voice through art. This you give us, and so here comes a second thank you, because with your songs you give us a little of yourselves! This is important, artists give themselves when they compose a work.

Finally, this competition takes place in view of the Christmas Concert, during which the winners' songs will be performed. It seems rather early to talk about Christmas now, in mid-September. Important festivities, however, we begin to prepare in advance, and the Nativity of Jesus merits this and more! And then, music does not only tell us about ourselves, but also about the search for God, and sometimes God himself! And that is good, because the *harmony* and *creativity*, of which I wanted to tell you something, are first of all found in Him, and Christmas shows them in a special and moving way, giving us the Lord's making Himself small for us, his making Himself man to communicate to us the infinite warmth of His divine love. At Christmas, God, the eternal Word, comes to listen to us and sets to work to make *harmony* with humanity, while in his astonishing *creativity* he looks at us through the eyes of a child, surprising us with his innocent tenderness. And this happens not only on 25 December, but every day! There is a beautiful song in my country which begins like this: "Every day is Christmas". For every one of us, every day, there is the possibility of the Lord being born and giving life to others: "Every day is Christmas".

Dear friends, it is good to see you here, to see in your eyes the dream and the power of music, together with the desire to make it a festive gift for others! Please continue to cultivate your grand dreams, your talent and your passion: dreams, talent and passion, together with creativity, will do good for you and for those you encounter on your path. I thank you for this meeting and ask you, please, to say a prayer for me. Thank you.
