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Audience with the members of the General Inspectorate for Public Security at the Vatican

This morning, in the Clementine Hall of the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father received in audience the managers, workers and officers of the General Inspectorate for Public Security at the Vatican for the traditional exchange of new year greetings.

In his address, Francis expressed his gratitude to all of them for their generous service, not without difficulties and risks. "I know that you run risks", he said. "You are, in a certain sense, the 'guardian angels' of St. Peter's Square. Indeed, every day you keep watch over this peculiar centre of Christianity, and other relevant areas of the Vatican, with great care, professionalism and a sense of duty. And especially in these recent times, you have shown competence and courage in facing the many challenges and various dangers, working with generosity in the prevention of crimes. In this way you have ensured safe access for pilgrims to the Basilica and to meetings with Peter's Successor. For all this I thank you. I thank you: they are not merely words, these, they come from the heart. Thank you! I know the hardships of your work and the sacrifices that you must make every day. Know that I appreciate you greatly and often think with sincere gratitude of you and your valuable work".

"The extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, an event of unique spiritual significance, has seen many pilgrims flock to Rome from all over the world in recent months. You too have been required to make greater efforts in your work, to ensure that the celebrations and events connected with the Jubilee were able to take place in safety and serenity. The external order over which you kept watch with great diligence, thoughtful care and constant willingness, thus contributed to fostering inner calm in pilgrims in search of peace in their encounter with the Lord's mercy".

The Pope recalled that the Christmas celebrations came to an end just a short while ago, in which "we turned our gaze to Bethlehem, to that land and that family who became Jesus' dwelling. Christmas urges us to measure ourselves, once again, with the lowering of the Son of God, Who wished to make Himself similar to us in everything other than sin, to make us understand the love with which He loved, and loves, us. This immeasurable love is a constant invitation to turn to acceptance, solidarity and forgiveness of our brothers. In this way we will be able to experience within ourselves that peace that the angels in Bethlehem proclaimed to men of good will".

The Holy Father concluded by asking the Lord to protect those present and commending them to the Virgin

Mary, and reiterating his gratitude for the tenacity and fidelity with which they perform their work. "I ask you to pray for me, and impart my heartfelt apostolic blessing".
