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Audience with the Employees of the Holy See and Vatican City State for the exchange of wishes for a Holy Christmas

At midday today, in the Paul VI Hall, the Holy Father Francis met with the employees of the Holy See and Vatican City State, with their respective families, for the exchange of Christmas greetings.

The following is the Pope's address to those present at the audience:

Address of the Holy Father

Good morning!

First of all, I would like to thank you. I thank each one of you for the work you do in here. Each one of you has his own work, and knows it... There are also working teams, in the Vatican... This work is what keeps the "train" that is the Vatican, the Holy See, on the rails; that seems so heavy, so big, with so many problems, so many things. And each one of you gives the best of himself to do this job. I am aware that without your work – one of you told me that he has been working here for 43 years; how many memories! – without the work that you do, things would not go well, and this means that the work of the Church would not go well, one would not be able to do so much work for the preaching of the Gospel, to help so many people, the sick, schools, so many things. You are a part of this "chain" that carries forward the work of the Church.

The first word I would like to say to you is: *work*. But not to say: work harder, get on with it! No, no, to say thank you to you. But in the Vatican, when we speak of work, there is also a problem. One of you came in and, indicating a young person, said, "Help precarious workers". The other day I had a meeting with Cardinal Marx, who is the president of the Council for the Economy, and with Msgr. Ferme, the secretary, and I said, "I do not want illegal work in the Vatican". I apologize if this still exists. The famous article 11, which is a valid article for a trial period, but a trial of one or two years, no more. Just as I said that no-one should be left without work, that is, laid off, unless there is another job waiting for his convenience, or an agreement that is convenient for the person, so I say: we must work in here to ensure there is no illegal work or precarious workers. It is also a problem of conscience for me, because we cannot teach the social doctrine of the Church and then do those things that are not acceptable. It is understandable that for a certain period of time a person must have a trial,

yes, you have a trial period of a year, perhaps two, but it stops there. Nothing illegal. This is my intention. Help me, help the superiors too, those who work for the Governorate, the Cardinal, the Secretary, help to resolve these problems of the Holy See: precarious workers, who still exist.

So, the first word is work, so as to thank you, to talk about precarious work and also, one last thing: work is your path to holiness, happiness and growth. Today, perhaps the worst curse is not to have a job. And many people – you will know many, certainly – have no job. Because work gives us dignity, and job security gives us dignity. I do not want to say the names, but you will find them in the newspapers. Today I saw in a newspaper these two problems, in two important companies, here in Italy, that are at risk, and to save themselves, they have to “rationalize” – that is the word – and lay off three to four thousand people. This is bad, very bad. Because dignity is lost. And this is a problem not only here, in the Vatican, or in Italy or in Europe: it is a global problem. It is a problem that depends on many factors in the world. Conserving jobs and having dignity, bringing bread home: “I bring it, because I earn it. Not because I pass by Caritas to take it, no. I earn it”. This is dignity. This is work. Thank you. Help your superiors to put an end to irregular work situations and keep your job, because it is your dignity. I would say: keep your job, but do it well! This is important!

The second word that comes to my mind to say to you is: *family*. I would like to say to you sincerely: when I know that a family is in crisis, that there are children who are distressed because they see that the family is ... a problem, I suffer. But let yourselves be helped. In the Governorate, I wanted the Secretary General to be a bishop so that he would have this pastoral dimension. Please, save the families. I know that it is not easy, that there are personality problems, psychological problems, problems ... many problems in a marriage. But try to look for help in time, to protect families. But I would also like to help you, in this: let yourselves be helped. If something is done, at least ensure that the children do not suffer; because when parents quarrel, children suffer, they suffer. And I give you some advice: do not quarrel in front of your children. Never. May they not understand. Protect the family. And for this reason, you have here Msgr. Verges and also the chaplains; they will tell you where to go to get help. Marriage, man and woman, fruitful: multiply, have children, go ahead. I was happy, today, when I saw many, many children here. It is a family. *Protect the family*, is the second word that came to my mind.

The third word that comes to mind - maybe some of you will want to tell me: “But stop it!” - is a recurring one: gossip. Maybe I am wrong ... in the Vatican you do not gossip ... maybe, I do not know ... One of you, a worker, told me one day that I had preached about rumours, and he had come with his wife to Mass, he told me: “Father, if we do not talk, we remain isolated in the Vatican”. That is very serious! You have heard what I say about gossip: the gossip is a terrorist, because like terrorists, he throws a bomb and goes away; the bomb explodes and damages so many others, with the language, that bomb. Do not terrorize! Do not terrorize with gossip, please. This is the third word that comes to me.

But someone could tell me: “Father, give us some advice: how can we do this, not gossip?”. Bite your tongue! Surely it will swell up, but you will have done well not to gossip. There is also the chatter of some people who should set an example and no, they do not do so.

And here, the fourth word I would like to say to you: *forgiveness*. “Forgiveness” and “sorry”. Because we do not always set a good example; we – I refer to “clerical fauna” – [smiles] we do not always set a good example. We clerics make mistakes in life: sins, injustices, or sometimes we treat people badly, we are a bit neurotic, injustices ... Forgive us for all these examples that are not good. We must ask for forgiveness. I also ask for forgiveness, because sometimes “my sparrows fly away” [laughs] [my patience escapes me] ...

Dear colleagues, brothers and sisters. Here are the words, the four words that came from the heart: work, family, gossip, forgiveness.

And the last word is my Christmas wish: have a *good Christmas*! But a Christmas that is good in the heart, in the family, even in the conscience. Do not be afraid, you too, to ask for forgiveness if your conscience rebukes you for something; look for a good confessor and do a nice clean-up! They say that the best confessor is the deaf priest [smiles]: he does not make you feel ashamed! But even without being deaf, there are so many who are

merciful, many, who listen to you and forgive you: "Go ahead!". Christmas is a good opportunity to make peace within too. We are all sinners, everyone. Yesterday I made my Christmas confession: the confessor came ... and it was good for me. We all have to confess.

I wish you a happy Christmas, with joy, that joy that comes from within. And I would not wish to forget the sick, who are perhaps present in your family, who suffer, and I send a blessing to them too. Thank you very much. Let us safeguard work, that it may be just; let us safeguard the family, safeguard our language; and, please, forgive us for the bad examples we set; and let us have a nice cleansing of the heart this Christmas, to be at peace and happy.

And before I leave, I would like to give my blessing to you and your families, to everyone. Thank you so much for your help.

Let us pray a Hail Mary to Our Lady: "*Hail Mary ...*"

[Blessing]

And pray for me: do not forget!
