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Audience with the Directors and Staff of the Inspectorate of Public Security at the Vatican

At 11.30 this morning, in the Clementine Hall of the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the directors and staff of the Inspectorate of Public Security in the Vatican.

During the meeting, the Pope gave the following address:

Address of the Holy Father

Mr. Chief of Police,

Mr. Prefect,

Dear Officials and Agents,

Welcome to this traditional event, which gives me the opportunity to express my gratitude for the service you provide to the Apostolic See and to Vatican City. I thank the Chief of Police for the kind words he addressed to me on your behalf. And I greet each of you, offering my sincere wishes for an Easter illuminated by faith and enlivened by the most beautiful and truest affections and values.

This Inspectorate of Public Security offers a precious collaboration to the pastoral ministry of the bishop of Rome. I am grateful to you for your vigilant presence and for the assistance you give during the celebration of the liturgical rites and the numerous manifestations that involve Saint Peter's Basilica and the whole of Vatican City. Moreover, the Pope and his collaborators know they can count on your cooperation during pastoral visits to the parishes and civil and ecclesial institutions of Rome, as well as on the occasion of pastoral visits throughout Italy.

Thanks to your discreet and effective surveillance, pilgrims who come from every part of the world to visit the

tomb of the Apostle Peter have the opportunity to live in peace this important experience of faith. You carry out your daily task by drawing inspiration from the civil and human ideals proper to members of the Italian State Police. However, contact with events of considerable religious and cultural importance and with priests, religious and laity who collaborate in the universal mission of the Successor of Peter, certainly offers your work further reasons for commitment and dedication. Indeed, the special condition in which you find yourself operating allows you to strengthen your professional dedication, drawing lymph and vigour from the perennial truth of the Gospel. Thus bearing witness in your activity to the human and spiritual values proper to Christianity, you can also contribute to the mission of the Church.

The Vatican is the destination not only of Christians from all over the world, but also of representatives of different religions, heads of states and high ecclesiastical and civil figures, who come to meet the Pope, or his collaborators in the various Dicasteries of the Holy See. Thanks also to your work, these encounters of dialogue and visits to the exemplars of culture and faith preserved in Vatican City can take place in an atmosphere of serenity and order.

As I reiterate my appreciation for your cooperation, I entrust each of you to the protection of the Mother of God. May she support you and welcome your intentions, presenting them to her Son. I address a special thought to your families, especially to your children and, as I ask you to pray for me, I wish you a Happy Easter and I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing to you and to those dear to you.

[Pope Francis then added the following extemporaneous remarks]

I would like to say another thing to you. At times, it makes me a bit sad when I leave and I see that you are there, working. I think, "But these people should be at home, with their families..." But you work there, to protect people, me... I do not know how to thank you. You are custodians, all of you: those who are there, those who monitor, those courageous people on the motorcycles... they have guaranteed work after retirement – they could go and work in the circus, they have such marvellous balance! But the word that always comes to mind is this: these people sacrifice themselves to protect the Pope, to protect people, just in case there is someone crazy who does something, an attack that ruins many families. And I have thought of the Protector of Jesus. And for this reason, this Easter I would like to give you this image of Saint Joseph, the Protector of Jesus, so that you may carry it with you, see where to keep it. It is a gift from the heart. But I would like, with this, to express my gratitude. And I would like to give it to your representative, Ms. Maiorino, who is always involved in these matters of "protection".
