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OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE



BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIEGE  
PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS

# **BOLLETTINO**

SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

N. 191205c

Thursday 05.12.2019

## **Audience with the delegations of Donors of the Christmas Tree and Nativity Display in Saint Peter's Square**

Today, in the Paul VI Hall, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the delegations from Trentino and Veneto for the donation of the Christmas tree and the Nativity display in Saint Peter's Square.

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

### **Address of the Holy Father**

Dear brothers and sisters!

I am pleased to welcome you on the day on which the Nativity display and the Christmas tree, set up in Saint Peter's Square, are presented, bound together by the common memory of the storm last autumn that devastated many areas of the Triveneto. I greet all of you, beginning with my brother bishops, whom I thank for their words. I express my deep gratitude to the civil authorities, who have supported the gift of these two Christmas religious symbols. They express the affection of the people of the provinces of Trent, Vicenza and Treviso, in particular of some localities located in the territories of the dioceses of Trent, Padua and Vittorio Veneto.

Today's meeting offers me the opportunity to renew my encouragement to your people, who last year suffered a devastating natural disaster, with the destruction of entire wooded areas. These are events that alarm us, they are warning signs that creation sends us, and that ask us to take effective decisions immediately for the protection of our common home.

Tonight the lights that adorn the tree will be switched on. It will remain next to the Nativity display until the end of the Christmas holidays, and both will be admired by the many pilgrims from all over the world. Thank you, dear friends, for these gifts, and also for the smaller trees destined for other areas of the Vatican. I have learned with pleasure that, in place of the plants removed, 40 firs will be replanted to replenish the forests seriously damaged by the storm of 2018. The spruce you wished to donate represents a sign of hope, especially for your forests, so

that they may be cleaned up as soon as possible to enable the work of reforestation to begin.

The Nativity display, made almost entirely of wood and composed of architectural elements characteristic of the Trentino tradition, will help visitors to enjoy the spiritual richness of the Nativity of the Lord. The wooden trunks from the areas affected by the storms, which serve as a backdrop to the landscape, underline the precariousness in which the Holy Family found itself on that night in Bethlehem. The artistic nativity scene of Conegliano, located in the Paul VI Hall, will also help us to contemplate the humble grotto where the Saviour was born.

As you know, a few days ago I was in Greccio to visit the place where Saint Francis made the first nativity scene. From there I published a Letter on the Nativity display, which is a simple and wonderful sign of our faith and is not lost: indeed, it is good that it is handed down from parents to children, from grandparents to grandchildren. It is a genuine way of communicating the Gospel, in a world that sometimes seems to be afraid to remember what Christmas really is, and erases the Christian signs, keeping only trivial and commercial images.

Dear friends, I wish with all my heart that you, your fellow citizens and all the inhabitants of your Regions, will spend the Nativity of the Lord in serenity and fraternity. May the Virgin Mary, who welcomed the Son of God into the weakness of human nature, help us to contemplate Him in the face of those who suffer, and may she support us in our commitment to be in solidarity with the weakest and most fragile people. I bless you from the heart, and I ask you please to pray for me. Thank you!

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