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Audience with the Artists of the Christmas Concert in the Vatican

This morning the Holy Father Francis received in audience, in the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the promoters, organizers and artists of the Christmas Concert in the Vatican, which will take place on Saturday 14 December in the Paul VI Hall, promoted by the Congregation for Catholic Education. The proceeds of the event will be donated to the *Scholas Occurrentes* Foundation and the Salesian *Missioni Don Bosco Valdocco Onlus*.

The following is the Holy Father's greeting to those present at the audience:

Greeting of the Holy Father

Dear Friends,

I offer a cordial greeting to all of you and I am pleased to meet you before the Christmas Concert in which you will take part. I greet Cardinal Versaldi and the officials of the Congregation for Catholic Education.

The time before Christmas calls us to ask ourselves: what is it that I am waiting for in my life? What is the great desire of my heart? You too, with your songs, help awaken or reawaken this healthy human "yearning" in the hearts of many people. Deep down, it is God Himself who puts this desire, this "thirst" in our hearts. And He comes to meet us by this route. Certainly not in the vain compulsion to acquire possessions or to keep up appearances. It is not there that God comes; no one will meet on that route. But surely He comes wherever there is hunger and thirst for peace, hunger and thirst for justice, freedom and love.

Once more this year, in the footsteps of Saint Francis of Assisi, I asked everyone to see in the nativity scene a simple and admirable sign of the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God. "The nativity scene clearly teaches that we cannot let ourselves be fooled by wealth and fleeting promises of happiness... By being born in a manger, God Himself launches the only true revolution that can give hope and dignity to the disinherited and the outcast: the revolution of love, the revolution of tenderness. From the manger, Jesus proclaims, in a meek yet powerful way, the need for sharing with the poor as the path to a more human and fraternal world in which no

one is excluded or marginalized (*Admirabile Signum*, 6).

In this act of humility, we find ourselves before a *disconcerting mystery*. God is unpredictable and constantly acts in unforeseeable ways. By taking us aback in this way, He constantly invites us not to grow proud but to grasp His disarming power in every little gesture of goodwill. This is all the more true for those who – like you – work closely with young people, and have a certain influence on their ways of thinking and acting. Speaking about your role, Saint Paul VI observed that the world “needs beauty in order not to sink into despair. Beauty, like truth, brings joy to the heart of man; it is that precious fruit that resists the wear and tear of time, unites generations and makes them share in wonderment” (*Address of Pope Paul VI to Artists*, 8 December 1965).

For this reason, all of us are called to build a “*global village of education*”, weaving a web of human relationships, for these are the best antidote to all forms of discrimination, violence and bullying. In this village, education and art meet through the languages of music and poetry, painting and sculpture, theatre and cinema. All these expressions of human creativity can be channels of fraternity and peace between the peoples that make up the human family, and of dialogue between the world’s religions. In this regard, I express my grateful appreciation to the *Salesians* and to *Scholas Occurrentes* for the commitment with which, in this spirit of service, they carry out their projects in the Amazon.

Dear artists, I thank you for all that you do. I wish you the best for your activities and your spiritual growth. May your hearts melt before the mystery of Christmas, so that you can convey some of that same tenderness to those who listen to you. Thank you and best wishes for your concert!
