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Audience with the employees of the Holy See and the Governorate of Vatican City State for the exchange of Christmas wishes

This morning, in the Paul VI Hall, the Holy Father Francis met with the employees of the Holy See and the Governorate of Vatican City State, with their respective families, for the exchange of Christmas wishes.

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

Address of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

We thank God for bringing us together to wish us a Merry Christmas. From the bottom of my heart I wish this to you, fathers, mothers, children, grandparents and all your loved ones. May Jesus be born in your hearts and in your families. And how is Jesus born? In love. There is no other way. A famous sacred hymn also says: "Where there is charity and love, there is God". That is where God is born, where love becomes tangible, becomes closeness, becomes tenderness, becomes compassion. God is there.

If, for example, there is a grandfather or grandmother in the family who can no longer go out easily, then let's go and see him or her - with all the precautions that the pandemic requires - but let's go, let's not leave them alone. And if we can't go, let's make a phone call and talk a bit. But above all, as soon as possible, let's go and spend some time with him or her. I'm going to pause a bit on this one about grandparents, because in this throwaway culture, grandparents are very often rejected. "Yes, they are fine, they are there...": they do not enter into our life. I am reminded of something one of my grandmothers told me as a child. There was a family where the grandfather lived with them and the grandfather grew old. And then, at lunch or dinner, when he took his soup, he would get dirty. And at some point, dad said, "We can't live like this, because we can't have friends over with

grandpa... I'll make grandpa eat and dine in the kitchen. I'll make him a nice little table". And so it happened. A week later, he came home to find his ten-year-old son playing with wood, nails, a hammer... "What are you making?" – "A little table, Dad". – "But why?" – "For you, for when you're old". Let's not forget that what we sow, our children will sow with us. Please don't neglect the grandparents, don't neglect the elderly: they are wisdom. "Yes, but he made my life impossible...". Forgive, forget, as God will forgive you. But don't forget the elderly, because this culture of discarding leaves them aside, always. Excuse me, but it is important to me to talk about grandparents, and I would like us all to go down this road.

Dearly beloved, it is my wish that Christmas will bring you some serenity, especially if you are going through a difficult period, with worries... Every family has them, but sometimes there are more difficult situations. I pray that those who need it most will receive the gift of serenity, both personal and in the family. The pandemic has caused many problems for families, both economic and psychological. I am thinking of children and adolescents, who have been particularly affected by periods of isolation and distance learning. But every age group has had its hardships with the pandemic.

And as far as employment is concerned, as I said a year ago, we have tried to guarantee employment; we have undertaken not to leave anyone without a job. Of course, the management of the period of lockdown was not easy; there have been some problems, I know. I hope we can find satisfactory solutions through dialogue, trying to come towards each other, always respecting the rights of the workers and the common good.

Let us ask for the intercession of Saint Joseph: he is "competent" in the field of work! But not only this. In fact, he is first and foremost the guardian of Jesus and the Virgin Mary. And, therefore, he is also the patron saint of the Church. As you know, the whole of this year has been dedicated to Saint Joseph: I was very happy about this, and I hope it has helped you to feel that he is closer, more present in your lives, in your families. You can entrust to him certain situations that are rather complicated, when you realise that your own strength is not enough, that there are no solutions at hand. Then you can turn to Saint Joseph in prayer. He is a man of few words - in the Gospel he never speaks, there are no words of Joseph - of few words but of many deeds. Try it. A man who listens to God's will and puts it into practice, without hesitation. I always pray to him, for this need, that other, and he always answers.

And do you know how God revealed his will to him? In his sleep, while he slept. This is a fact recounted in the Gospels, and it also has a symbolic meaning: it is not just a question of dreams in the psychological sense, but of revelations of the divine plan, which he received in his sleep and then, on waking, immediately fulfilled. We see this four times: the first, when he has to take Mary as his bride; the second, when Herod threatens Jesus' life and he has to flee to Egypt; the third, when it is time to return to his homeland; and the fourth, when it is time to settle in Nazareth. The Lord gave Joseph all these "directions" in a dream, through an angel. But they were not fantasies or hallucinations; on the contrary, they were messages that were closely aligned to reality, destined to guide the path of the Holy Family. They were the manifestation of God's Providence.

And let us pause on this word, *Providence*, for a moment. As the story of Joseph and Mary teaches us, the *family* is the special place where God's Providence is experienced. So, I want to wish you too, each one of your families, precisely this: to experience the paternal hand of God guiding our steps along his paths, for the good of the spouses, for the good of the children, for the good of the whole family. God's plans are not always clear; they often take time to manifest themselves, they require patience; above all, they require faith, a great deal of trust that God wants only and always the good, the greatest good for us and our loved ones. And so we must do as Saint Joseph did: abandon ourselves to God - this is what sleep means - to receive his messages.

I pray for you. Pray for one another too, so that the working community is strengthened, becomes more united. I thank you for coming to this meeting. I pray to Saint Joseph and to Our Lady to accompany you on your journey, and may Jesus, the Saviour, fill your hearts and homes with joy and peace. To all of you and to your families, I wish you a Merry Christmas. And thank you for all the work you do here: thank you very much!
