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Audience with employees of the Holy See and Vatican City State Governorate 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 Vatican City State Governorate, with their respective family members, for the exchange of Christmas wishes.

The following are the words of greeting addressed by the Pope to those present at the audience:

Address of the Holy Father

Dear sisters, dear brothers, good morning and welcome!

I am happy we can exchange Christmas wishes. I express first of all my gratitude to each one of you for the work you do, both for the benefit of Vatican City and for the Universal Church. As you do every year, you have come with your families, and for this I would like to reflect a moment, briefly, with you precisely on these two values: *work* and the *family*.

First: *work*. What you do is certainly a lot. Passing through the streets and courtyards of Vatican City, in the corridors and offices of the various Dicasteries and in the different places of service, the sensation is that of finding oneself in a large hive. And even now, there are those who are working to make this meeting possible, who were unable to come: let us say thank you to them!

Today you are here in a festive atmosphere, with the liveliness of the celebration in your heart, the liveliness of smiles. Instead, for the rest of the year life is more ordinary, it is not a feast; it is continual work, but always with the smile of the heart. After all, they are two different faces of the same beauty: that of those who build, with others and for others, something good for everyone. Jesus Himself showed this to us: He, the Son of God, who out of love for us humbly made Himself an apprentice carpenter, schooled by Joseph (cf. *Lk 2:51-52*; Saint Paul VI *Homily in Nazareth*, 5 January 1964). In Nazareth, few people knew it, but in the carpenter's workshop,

alongside and through many other things, craftsmen were building the salvation of the world! Have you thought about this: that salvation was built by craftsmen? And the same, in a similar sense, applies to you who, with your daily work, in the hidden Nazareths of your particular tasks, contribute to bringing the whole of humanity to Christ and to spreading His Kingdom throughout the world (cf. Vatican Ecumenical Council II, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium*, 34-36).

And then we come to the second point: the *family*. It brings joy to see you together, also with children: how beautiful, how beautiful they are! Saint John Paul II used to say that, for the Church, the family is like its “cradle” (Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris consortio*, 22 November 1981, 15). Love the family, please. And it is true: indeed, founded and rooted in Marriage, the family is the place where life is generated – and how important it is today to welcome life! Then, it is the first community where, ever since childhood, one encounters faith, the Word of God and the Sacraments, where one learns how to take care of each other and to grow together in love, at all ages. Faith must be transmitted in the family, and Saint Paul said to Timothy, “Your mother, your grandmother...” – in the family there was faith. I therefore encourage you – parents, children, grandparents and grandchildren, grandparents have great importance – I encourage you always to stay united, close to one another and around the Lord: in respect, in listening, in reciprocal care. Something I would like to emphasize about the family. A question I ask parents with small children: did you manage to play with your children? Do you play with your children? It is important to lie on the ground with your little boy, your little girl... Play with your children! And then, another thing: do you visit your grandparents? Are your grandparents in the family, or do they live in a nursing home with no-one to go and visit them? Perhaps your grandparents have to stay in a nursing home, but go and visit them! Let them hear from you all the time.

And please, also in prayer together, because without prayer you do not go forward, even in the family. Teach your children to pray. And in this regard, in these days, I suggest that you find some moments in which to gather beside one another, around the Nativity scene, to give thanks to God for His gifts, to ask for help for a future, and to renew your affection for one another before the Infant Jesus.

Dear friends, thank you for this meeting, and for everything you do. I wish you all the best for Holy Christmas and for the year that is about to begin: the *Holy Year of Hope*. Hope grows in the family too! I bless you and I ask you, do not forget to pray for me. And if someone has some special difficulty, please talk about it, tell the heads, because we want to solve all difficulties, and this is done through dialogue, it is done with dialogue, not with shouting and not with keeping quiet. There must be dialogue, always! “Mr. Manager, Cardinal, Pope, Father... I have these difficulties. Can you help me resolve them?”. And we will try to resolve the difficulties together. Thank you, thank you very much, and merry Christmas.
