



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
ON THE OCCASION OF THE LIGHTING OF THE CHRISTMAS TREE IN ASSISI**

*Vatican City State
Sunday, 6 December 2015*

[Multimedia]

Looking at that boat ... Jesus is always with us, even in difficult times. How many brothers and sisters have drowned at sea! They are with the Lord now. But he came to give us hope, and we must take this hope. He came to tell us that he is stronger than death, that he is greater than any evil. He came to tell us he is merciful, all mercy; and this Christmas I invite you to open your hearts to mercy and forgiveness. But it is not easy to forgive these massacres. It's not easy.

I would like to thank the Navy: the good men and women. I thank you, for you were the instrument of hope that brings us Jesus. You, among us, you have been sowers of hope, the hope of Jesus. Thank you, Antonio, you and all your teammates and all that this land of Italy has so generously received: Southern Italy is an example of solidarity for the whole world! For everyone who looks at the crib, they can say to Jesus: "But, I too have lent a hand because you are a sign of hope".

And to all refugees, I say a word, that of the prophet: Raise your head, the Lord is near. And with him is strength, salvation, hope. The heart, perhaps, [is] sorrowful, but the head [is] high in the hope of the Lord.

I embrace all of you refugees and all of you in the Navy and I wish you a blessed Christmas, full of hope and with much affection from the Lord.