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Audience with Employees of the Holy See and the Governorate of Vatican City State for 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 family members, for Christmas wishes.

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

Address of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters,

It is a joy for me to meet you, Vatican employees and your families as we approach the Christmas holidays. I thank your medical colleague who spoke on behalf of all of you: his words were good for us and give us hope. I am grateful to every one of you for the work you do with passion in the service of the Roman Curia and Vatican City. The pandemic has caused not only a critical health situation but also many economic difficulties for many families and institutions. The Holy See has also been affected and is making every effort to deal with this precarious situation in the best possible way. It is a question of meeting your legitimate needs as employees and those of the Holy See: we must meet each other's needs and move forward in our work together, always. Our collaborators, you who work in the Holy See, are the most important thing: no one is to be left out, no one is to leave work; the superiors of the Governorate and also of the Secretariat of State, everyone, are looking for ways not to diminish your income, to diminish nothing at this moment which is very bad for the fruit of your work. Many ways are being sought, but the principles are the same: do not leave your jobs; no one should be laid off, no one should suffer the negative economic effects of this pandemic. But all together we must work harder to help each other solve this problem, which is not easy, because you know: here, both in the Governorate and in the Secretariat of State, there is no Mandrake, there is no magic wand, and we must look for ways to solve this problem, and with goodwill, all together, we will solve it. Help me in this and I will help you: all together we will help each other to move forward as one family. Thank you.

Christmas is a feast of joy because “to us a child is born” (cf. Isaiah 9: 5), and we are all called to go towards Him. The shepherds set an example to us. We too must go towards Jesus: shake ourselves out of our torpor, our boredom, our apathy, our lack of interest and our fear, especially in this time of the health emergency, in which we struggle to rediscover our enthusiasm for life and faith. It is tiring, it is a time that tires us. Imitating the shepherds, we are called to assume three attitudes, represented by three verbs: *rediscover*, *contemplate* and *announce*. Each one of us may see how we can *rediscover*, *contemplate* and *announce* in our own life.

It is important to rediscover the birth of the Son of God as the most important event of history. It is the event foretold by the prophets centuries before it happened. It is the event that is still spoken of today: which historical figure do we speak of like we speak of Jesus? Twenty centuries have passed and Jesus lives more than ever – and He is also more persecuted, very often – and more soiled by the lack of witness of many Christians. Twenty centuries have passed. And those who turn away from Him, by their behaviour, bear further witness to Jesus: without Him, man falls prey to evil: to sin, vice, selfishness, violence and hatred. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us: this is the event that we must rediscover.

The second attitude is that of *contemplation*. The first was to *rediscover*, the second to *contemplate*. The shepherds say: “Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us” (Lk 2: 15): that is, let us meditate, contemplate, pray. And here is the most beautiful example given to us by Jesus’ mother, by Mary: she conserved in her heart, she pondered. And what do we discover by contemplating? Saint Paul tells us: “When the goodness and loving kindness of God our Saviour appeared, He saved us, not because of deeds done by us in righteousness, but in virtue of His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit” (Tim 3: 4-5). We discover that God manifests His goodness in the Child Jesus. He manifests His mercy for each one of us who knows that we need mercy in our lives. Everyone knows, and can name those things that are in his or her heart that need God’s mercy. Who does not feel moved by tenderness in front of a small child? In the Child Jesus, God shows Himself to be lovable, full of goodness and gentleness. We can truly love a God like that with all our hearts. God manifests His goodness in order to save us. And what does it mean to be saved? It means entering into the very life of God, becoming adopted children of God through baptism. This is the great meaning of Christmas: God becomes man so that we can become children of God.

The Second Person of the Trinity became man, in order to become the elder brother, the firstborn of a multitude of brothers. And so God saves us through baptism and makes us all enter as brothers: to contemplate this mystery, to contemplate the Child. And this is why the catechesis that the Nativity display gives us is so beautiful, because it makes us see the tender Child who announces to us the mercy of God. Contemplate the Nativity displays. And when I blessed these statuettes the other day, it was a form of “contemplation”. The baby in the crib is a figurine, but it is a figurine that makes us think of the great mercy of God who became a child.

And faced with this reality, the third attitude is to *announce*. This is the attitude that helps us to go forward. The three attitudes that help us at this moment, and we must go forward in this way. How should we do this? Let us look again at the shepherds: “And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them” (Lk 2: 20). They went back to their everyday lives. We too must go back to our everyday lives: Christmas is passing. But we must return to family life, to work, transformed, we must return glorifying and praising God for all that we have heard and seen. We must bring the good news to the world: Jesus is our saviour. And this is a duty. Why do I have hope? Because the Lord has saved me. To remember what we contemplate and to go forth and proclaim it. Announce it with the word, with the testimony of our lives.

However, difficulties and sufferings cannot obscure the light of Christmas, which inspires an inner joy that no one can take away from us.

So let us go forward, with these three attitudes: *rediscover*, *contemplate* and *announce*.

Dear brothers and sisters, I reiterate my gratitude to you, I reiterate my appreciation for your work. So many of you are an example to others: you work for the family, in a spirit of service to the Church and always with the joy that comes from knowing that God is always among us, He is God-with-us. And do not forget: joy is contagious

and good for the whole working community. Just as, for example, the sadness that comes from gossip is ugly and drags you down. Joy is contagious and makes you grow. Be joyful, be witnesses of joy! And from the bottom of my heart, Merry Christmas to you all.
