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Audience with 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 family members, 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!

Thank you for coming to this appointment, in which we exchange Christmas wishes.

First of all, we must thank the Lord, because with his help, we have overcome the critical phase of the pandemic. Let us not forget this! When we were in lockdown we asked ourselves, who knows when we will be free to move, to meet up, and so on. Then, as soon as things change, it happens that we lose our memory and go forward as though nothing happened. And perhaps we do not even thank the Lord! This is neither Christian nor even human. No, we should give thanks because we have been able to resume work, and are also trying to overcome certain more or less major problems that were created in the most difficult period. Restarting is a job we must all do.

We must not forget, because the long period of the pandemic has left its marks. Not only material, economic consequences; it has also left marks on the life of people, in relationships, in the serenity of families. And this is why today I wish you, most of all, *serenity*: serenity for each one of you and for your families. Serenity does not mean that everything goes well, that there are no problems or difficulties; no, it does not mean this. The Holy Family of Jesus, Joseph and Mary shows us this. We can imagine, when they arrived in Bethlehem, Our Lady was beginning to feel the pains, Joseph did not know where to go, he knocked on many doors but there was no room... And yet in the heart of Mary and Joseph there was an underlying serenity, that came from God, that

came from the knowledge of being in his will, of seeking it together, in prayer and in mutual love. This is what I wish for you: that each of you has faith in God and that in your families there is the simplicity of relying on his help, of praying to him and giving thanks to him.

I would like to wish serenity in particular to your children, to the boys and girls, because they have suffered a lot as a result of the lockdown, and have accumulated a lot of tension. It is normal, it is inevitable. But we must not pretend nothing has happened, we must reflect, try to understand, because coming out of a crisis better does not happen by magic, we must work on ourselves, calmly and patiently. Young people can do so too, naturally with the help of parents and at times other people, but it is important that they are aware that crises are stages of growth and demand they work on themselves.

This is the first wish that comes to my mind, starting from the pandemic. I wish you serenity, in your heart, in family relationships, at work. Serenity.

And the second is this: that we be *witnesses and artisans of peace*. In this moment in world history, we are required to feel more strongly the responsibility of each person doing their part to build peace. And this has a particular significance for us, living and working in Vatican City. Not because this tiny State, the smallest in the world, has a specific special weight, not for this; but because we have as our Head and Master the Lord Jesus, who calls to us to unite our humble daily effort to his work of reconciliation and of peace. Starting from the environment in which we live, from relationships with our colleagues, from how we deal with misunderstandings and conflicts that may arise at work; or at home, in the family sphere; or even with friends, or in the parish. It is there that we can concretely be witnesses and artisans of peace.

Sowing peace. And how? For example: by avoiding speaking ill of others “behind their back”. If we did only this, we would be creators of peace everywhere! If there is something wrong, let us speak directly to the person involved, respectfully, frankly. Let us be courageous. Let us not pretend nothing is wrong and then speak ill of him or her with other people. Let us try to be sincere and honest. Let us try and we will see that this works well.

Dear brothers and sisters, I wish all the best to you and your loved ones. Greetings from me to your children and your elderly at home. They are the treasure in the family, the treasure of society. And thank you: thank you for all that you do here, for your work and also for your patience at times, because I know that there are situations in which you exercise patience: thank you for that. We all have to go forward with patience, with joy, thanking the Lord who gives us this grace of work, but keep it and also do it with dignity. Thank you for this, thank you for what you do here. Without you, all this would not go on. Thank you indeed!

I bless you all from my heart, and I ask you to please pray for me. And Merry Christmas to you all!
