



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE "CHRISTMAS CONTEST"

*Consistory Hall
Saturday, 16 September 2023*

[Multimedia]

Dear friends, welcome!

I joyfully greet all of you, young musicians participating in the 2023 Christmas Contest: organizers, those accompanying, and benefactors. I am happy about this initiative, which aims to invest in education to give young people and their creativity a voice. I also express my gratitude to the Dicastery for Culture and Education, the *Gravissimum Educationis* Foundation and the Republic of San Marino for their fruitful cooperation in the realization of the event, as well as to the promoters of the associated project, “Good makes headlines”, which during the summer offered an important training opportunity to young people from faraway countries at the Dicastery for Communication. Thank you all!

Dear young people, you are composers! And composition is a demanding art, that requires on the one hand, knowledge of music with its rules and its language, and on the other, the capacity to give voice to the questions, the inspirations and the desires of the heart. It is an art that requires, in two words, *harmony* and *creativity*, which go together. In this sense, we can say that composing music is a metaphor for life, in which we need both to synchronize harmoniously with others, with society and its rules, and to give space to the originality of each person’s way of being and expressing him or herself.

Harmony and *creativity*. They are not in conflict: in fact, the search for harmony, which requires commitment, dedication and constancy, in music as in life, does not humiliate, but liberates each person’s uniqueness, offering the artist the tools to communicate in a way that is comprehensible

to others, so as to become a constructive gift for the joy of all. Therefore, a first thank you goes precisely to your commitment to studying the harmonic art of music, which involves effort and many hours of practice!

At the same time, however, what the artist shares in each of his works speaks of unique, personal and intimate feelings. Thus, in the compositions you submit for the Contest — behind each of the titles you have offered — you give us the opportunity to encounter you in a unique moment, that of inspiration, which is all your own, but which you wanted to share: a flicker of light, a tremor of love, a glimpse of blue in the sky of life, a jolt of amazement in the face of beauty, or perhaps a twinge of pain or a cry of protest, which appeared in your heart and to which you gave voice through art. You give us all this, and so here comes a second thank you, because with your songs you give us a little of yourselves! This is important; artists give themselves when they compose a work.

Finally, this competition takes place in view of the Christmas Concert, during which the winners' songs will be performed. It seems rather early to talk about Christmas now, in mid-September. However, we begin to prepare important festivities in advance, and the Nativity of Jesus merits this and more! And then, music does not only tell us about ourselves, but also about the search for God, and sometimes God himself! And that is good, because the *harmony* and *creativity*, of which I wanted to tell you something, are first of all found in him, and Christmas presents them in a special and moving way. The Lord humbled himself for us and made himself man to communicate to us the infinite warmth of his divine love. At Christmas, God, the eternal Word, comes to listen to us and sets to work to make *harmony* with humanity, while in his astonishing creativity he looks at us through the eyes of a child, surprising us with his innocent tenderness. And this happens not only on 25 December, but every day! There is a beautiful song in my country which begins like this: "Every day is Christmas". For every one of us, every day, there is the possibility of the Lord being born and giving life to others: "Every day is Christmas".

Dear friends, it is good to see you here, to see in your eyes the dream and the power of music, together with the desire to make it a festive gift for others! Please continue to cultivate your grand dreams, your talent and your passion: dreams, talent and passion, together with creativity, will do good for you and for those you encounter on your path. I thank you for this meeting and ask you, please, to say a prayer for me. Thank you.

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