



# SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE **BOLLETTINO**

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## **Audience with employees of the Holy See and Vatican City State Governorate for Christmas greetings**

This morning, in the Paul VI Hall, the Holy Father Francis met with employees of the Holy See and the Governorate of Vatican City State, with their respective families, to exchange Christmas wishes.

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

### **Greeting of the Holy Father**

Dear brothers and sisters!

I am happy to be with you for our Christmas appointment. Thank you for coming, and with your families. Thank you!

My wish this time can be summed up in one word: *smile*.

I was inspired by one of the last countries I visited last month: Thailand. It is called the country of the smile, because there people smile a lot, they have a special kindness, very noble, which is summed up in this facial feature, which is reflected in all their bearing. This experience impressed me, and makes me think of the smile as an expression of love and affection, typically human.

When we look at a newborn baby, we are led to smile at it, and if a smile blossoms on its small face, then we feel a simple, naive emotion. The child responds to our gaze, but his smile is much more “powerful”, because it is new, pure, like spring water, and in us adults it awakens an intimate nostalgia for childhood.

This happened in a unique way between Mary and Joseph and Jesus. The Virgin and her husband, with their love, made a smile blossom on the lips of their newborn child. But when this happened, their hearts were filled

with a new joy, from Heaven. And the little stable in Bethlehem was illuminated.

Jesus is the smile of God. He came to reveal to us the love of our Heavenly Father, His goodness, and the first way He did so was to smile at His parents, like every newborn child in this world. And they, the Virgin Mary and Saint Joseph, because of their great faith, were able to accept that message, they recognized in Jesus' smile God's mercy for them and for all those who were waiting for His coming, the coming of the Messiah, the Son of God, the King of Israel.

Behold, dearly beloved, in the manger we too relive this experience: to look at the Child Jesus and feel that God is smiling at us there, and smiling at all the poor of the earth, at all those who await salvation, who hope for a more fraternal world, where there is no more war and violence, where every man and woman can live in his or her dignity as son and daughter of God.

Here too, in the Vatican and in the various Roman offices of the Holy See, we always need to let ourselves be renewed by the smile of the Child Jesus. Let His defenceless goodness purify us from the waste that often encrusts our hearts, and prevents us from giving the best of ourselves. It is true, work is work, and there are other places and moments in which each person expresses himself in a fuller and richer way; but it is also true that we spend a good part of our days in the work environment, and we are convinced that the quality of work goes hand in hand with the human quality of relationships, of lifestyle. This is especially true for us, who work in the service of the Church and in the name of Christ.

Sometimes it becomes difficult to smile, for many reasons. Then we need God's smile: Jesus, only He can help us. Only He is the Saviour, and sometimes we experience this in our lives.

Other times things go well, but then there is the danger of feeling too safe and forgetting about others who are struggling. Then too we need God's smile to strip us of false security and bring us back to the taste for simplicity and gratuitousness.

So, dear friends, today let us exchange this wish: at Christmas, participating in the Liturgy, and also contemplating the manger, let us wonder at God's smile, which Jesus came to bring. It is He Himself, this smile. Like Mary, like Joseph and the shepherds of Bethlehem, let us welcome Him, let us allow ourselves to be purified, and we too can bring others a humble, simple smile.

Thank you all! Take this wish to your loved ones at home, especially the sick and the elderly. And let us remain united in prayer. Merry Christmas!

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