



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE **BOLLETTINO**

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Audience with the delegations of donors of the Christmas Tree and Nativity Display in Saint Peter's Square

This morning, the Holy Father Francis received in audience, in the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the delegations from Castelli in Abruzzo, Italy, and from the municipality of Kočevje. In south-east Slovenia, for the gift of the Christmas tree and Nativity display in Saint Peter's Square.

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

Address of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters!

You have come for the official presentation of the Christmas tree and the Nativity display in Saint Peter's Square; I warmly welcome you and I thank you for your presence. I greet the delegation from the Republic of Slovenia, led by the Foreign Minister, accompanied by Cardinal Rodé and the Archbishop of Maribor, and composed of other ministers, ambassadors and distinguished guests. Indeed, Slovenia has donated this majestic red pine, chosen from the forests of Kočevje. And I greet the delegation from the diocese of Teramo-Atri, with Bishop Lorenzo Leuzzi and various civil authorities: the monumental ceramic Nativity display comes from your land, and specifically from Castelli. This afternoon the inauguration of both of these "icons" of Christmas will take place. Never as in this year have they been a sign of hope for Romans and for the pilgrims who are able to come to admire them.

The tree and the Nativity display help create the Christmas atmosphere conducive to living with faith the mystery of the Nativity of the Redeemer. In the Nativity, everything speaks to us of "good" poverty, of evangelical poverty, which makes us blessed: contemplating the holy Family and the various characters, we are attracted by their disarming humility. Our Lady and Saint Joseph came from Nazareth to Bethlehem. There is no place for them, not even a small room (see Lk 2:7); Mary listens, observes and keeps everything in her heart (see Lk 2:19, 51). Joseph searches for a place suitable for her and for the Child who is about to be born. The shepherds are key

figures in the Nativity display, as in the Gospel. They live in the outdoors. They keep watch. The announcement of the Angels is for them, and they immediately go to look for the Saviour who is born (see *Lk 2: 8-16*). The feast of the Nativity reminds us that Jesus is our peace, our joy, our strength, our comfort. But, to receive these gifts of grace, it is necessary to feel small, poor and humble like the figures in the Nativity.

This Christmas too, in the midst of the suffering of the pandemic, Jesus, small and helpless, is the “Sign” that God gives to the world (see *Lk 2: 12*). An enchanting image, as the Letter on the Nativity display that I signed a year ago in Greccio begins. It will be good for us to reread it in these days.

Dear friends, I thank you all wholeheartedly! And also those who were unable to be present today, as well as those who have collaborated in the transport and setting up of the tree and the Nativity display. May the Lord reward you for your availability and generosity. I send you my best wishes for a Christmas celebration full of hope, and I ask you to convey them to your families and to all your fellow citizens. I assure you of my prayers and I bless you. And you too, please do not forget to pray for me. Merry Christmas! Thank you.
