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Audience with Members of the National Union of Travelling Fairground Workers

This morning, in the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the members of the National Union of Travelling Fairground Workers (*Unione Nazionale Attrazionisti Viaggianti, U.N.A.V.*), to whom he addressed the following words of greeting:

Greeting of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning, welcome, and thank you!

I greet you all from my heart, and I thank you for your presence. I thank the president of your association for his words. I don't know... can you sing? I ask... a bit, more or less... But to offer good wishes, what do you sing? Let us give good wishes, by singing! Because this youngster here, Sister Geneviève, is eighty! Shall we sing "Happy birthday" to her?

[The Pope sings:] Happy birthday Geneviève, happy birthday to you!

There she is, look! How sweet!

The pandemic prevented you from carrying out your usual activities – this is true – travelling from square to square with your attractions. I know that the *Migrantes* Foundation was close to you, encouraging you to keep going with a spirit of faith and hope. Now, thanks be to God, you have been able to resume. The Church continues to accompany you, proclaiming to you Christ the Saviour, who travelled through cities and villages bringing the joyful news of the Kingdom of God to everyone. "The Lord", the Scripture says, "It is the Lord who goes before you; he will be with you, he will not fail you or forsake you; do not fear or be dismayed" (*Dt 31:8*). Today I address these words to you, dear brothers and sisters, travelling fairground workers.

The Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium* begins thus: "The joy of the Gospel fills the hearts and lives of all

who encounter Jesus" (1). And you to cooperate in a broad sense to the proclamation of the Gospel, for the joy you take to people with your attractions. You are sowers of joy, do not forget this! And at times, you sow joy in moments when the heart is not joyful, it is heavy with problems... But you sow, your vocation is to disseminate joy. Therefore, I encourage you always to keep your heart and your life open to a perspective of faith, that is born of the encounter with Jesus, present and active in his Church, present and active in you, in every one of the people you find, in every one of the people you make laugh. Which is one of the beautiful things: sowers of smiles! It is beautiful!

As they ride on the merry-go-rounds in towns and cities, you offer children and adults carefree moments, distracting them a little from the worries that assail daily life. The happiness of a child on a merry-go-round is an image of wholesome joy that is part of the memory of every family.

The sense of joy and celebration that you spread springs from creativity and fantasy; it does not replicate the artificial and conformist models that circulate in the media; it is nurtured not by the search for ever new sensations, but from the simplicity and authenticity one experiences in a fairground.

Dear brothers and sisters, go forward in your travelling work! In a world where we often breathe in a grey and heavy atmosphere, you remind us that the path to being happy is simplicity; and also form of entertainment in the open air and in company, the opposite of what we increasingly see today, each person alone with a smartphone or computer, which isolates you from social communication. You invite us to go out, to meet in the square, to have fun together. I appreciate you for this. And I thank you because, in the end, you remind us that we are not made only for work, but also for leisure, and God is happy when we celebrate together as brothers and sisters, in simplicity. And your vocation is to laugh and make people smile. At times the heart is sad, but the vocation leads you to bring smiles to others, smiles that make them laugh. And this is good: spreading smiles, spreading joy, spreading peace, spreading a more positive outlook than the one people are experiencing at the time. Keep going, with joy...

I commend you to the intercession of the Virgin Mary, "Mother of Travellers", a sure guide who leads to Jesus. And may your patron Saint John Bosco and the Servant of God Don Dino Torreggiani, the apostle of caravans, also support you. I bless you from my heart, and I ask you, please, to pray for me. Thank you!
