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Amazonia, star of the Christmas Concert in the Vatican

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On Saturday 14 December, the 27th edition of the Christmas Concert at the Vatican, organized by the Congregation for Catholic Education to support the Don Bosco Valdocco Onlus Missions and the Pontifical *Scholas Occurrentes* Foundation, will be held in the Paul VI Hall. This year, the event will emphasize Pope Francis' commitment to the Amazon, to which the recent Synod was dedicated.

The organizations that promote the concert have united for the protection of the Amazon and indigenous peoples. Within the framework of a common charity project – “Let's network for the Amazon” - two specific activities have been identified, to which everyone can contribute with donations through the Italian charity telephone number 45530, active until 31 December.

The objective of *Scholas Occurrentes* is to raise awareness among the students of the 450,000 schools all over the world belonging to the *Scholas* social platform, by promoting reforestation activity in schools; by contributing, following the example of the native populations of the Amazon, to the reconstruction of harmonious relations with nature and between human beings; and by implementing student and school exchange programmes.

The Salesian mission, on the other hand, aims to preserve the presence, tradition and culture of the indigenous population in the district of Lauaretê, in the northwest of the Brazilian Amazon, on the border with Colombia, a remote place often neglected by political and social institutions. In this area, where social and health conditions are already precarious, an illegal trade in alcohol is spreading, with the consequent increase in violence, robberies and murders, especially among minors. The Salesians, who welcome children at risk on a daily basis, want to offer them a protected place to live.

The Christmas Concert will be broadcast on Italian Channel 5 during prime time on 24 December and the artists taking part in it are : Lionel Richie, Bonnie Tyler, Susan Boyle, Mirelle Mathieu, and Leo Rojas; the extensive Italian contingent is composed of Elisa, Simone Cristicchi, Fabio Rovazzi, Noemi, Mahmood, Arisa, Andrea Griminelli, Davide Merlini, Alma Manera, guitarist Giorgio Albiani and tenor Fabio Armiliato.

The Orchestra will be the Italian Film Orchestra directed by Maestro Renato Serio and Maestro Adriano Pennino. There will also be a gospel choir from the United States, the Charleston Mass Gospel Choir, and another Italian choir, the *Piccolo Coro Le Dolci Note*, while the group of vocalists will be from the Voice Academy.

The promoters wish to express their gratitude to all the collaborators, artists, media and collaborators of the concert: *Cattolica di Assicurazioni*, GVM Care & Research Plant Installation, Garofoli, Gruppo Telesforo, Il Tempo, Ottaviani and to all the spectators who will be present in the Aula Paolo VI to enjoy the event live.

Tickets can be purchased online at www.concertodinatale.it or at all TicketOne points of sale. For information and reservations call +39 06 68136738. The entire sum of the sale of tickets and donations through solidarity SMS will go to the *Scholas Occurrentes* Foundations and the Don Bosco Valdocco Missions.

The Holy See and the Sant'Egidio Community again welcome again refugees from the island of Lesbos

The Holy Father Francis, on the occasion of his trip to the island of Lesbos in April 2016, brought with him to Italy three Syrian asylum-seeking families. The Holy See took care of their reception and sustenance, whereas the Sant'Egidio Community managed their lodging and integration.

Three years after this event, last May the Pope asked His Eminence Cardinal Konrad Krajewski, Almoner of His Holiness, to return to the island to renew his solidarity with the Greek people and with the refugees and, also on this occasion, expressed the desire to make a new gesture of solidarity and to welcome a group of young refugees and some families from Afghanistan, Cameroon and Togo.

After an intense period of official negotiations between the competent bodies to create this new humanitarian corridor, the Ministry of the Interior of the Italian Republic gave the final consensus for the development of the operation.

Today, 2 December, Cardinal Krajewski returned to the island of Lesbos, together with some officials of the Sant'Egidio Community, and will return to Italy on 4 December with a group of 33 refugees seeking political asylum. This operation will end in December, when ten other refugees will be accompanied to Italy, thus initiating the necessary procedures to request international protection.

Also in this case, the reception of the refugees will be the responsibility of the Holy See, through the Office of Papal Charities, and the Sant'Egidio Community.
