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BOLLETTINO

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Audience with participants in the “Christmas Contest” Initiative

This morning, in the Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the participants in the “Christmas Contest” initiative, and addressed the following greeting to them:

Greeting of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters!

A cordial greeting to you all, who in various ways are participating in the *Christmas Contest*. I thank the Pontifical Foundation *Gravissimum Educationis* and *Missioni Don Bosco Valdocco* for having proposed this contest, which gives voice to the young, inviting them to create new songs inspired by Christmas and its values. And so a special welcome to you young people, who have enthusiastically taken up the challenge; as well as to those who accompany you: sportsmen and women, with their Federations, and singers.

I am happy to meet you, now at the threshold of Advent, the period that every year introduces us to Christmas and its Mystery. This year too, its lights will be dimmed by the consequences of the pandemic, which still weighs heavily on our time. All the more reason why we are called to question ourselves and not to lose hope. The feast of the Birth of Christ is not out of tune with the trial we are going through, because it is the quintessential feast of compassion, the feast of tenderness. Its beauty is humble and full of human warmth.

The beauty of Christmas shines through in the sharing of small gestures of genuine love. It is not alienating, it is not superficial, it is not evasive; on the contrary, it expands the heart, opening it up to gratuitousness – gratuitousness, a word artists understand well! – to the giving of self, and can also generate cultural, social and educational dynamics.

It is with this spirit that we have given life to the Global Compact on Education, a broad educational alliance “to form mature individuals capable of overcoming division and antagonism, and to restore the fabric of relationships for the sake of a more fraternal humanity” [1]

To achieve these objectives, it takes courage: “the courage to place the human person at the centre” and to offer oneself “in service to the community” [2]. It takes courage, and also creativity. For example, you have composed new Christmas songs and you have shared them for a greater project, a project that believes in beauty as a way of human growth, to dream together of a better world.

I like to repeat the words of Saint Paul VI: “This world in which we live needs beauty in order not to sink into despair” [3]. Which beauty? Not the false one, made of appearances and earthly riches, which is hollow and a generator of emptiness. No. But that of a God made flesh, the one of faces- the beauty of faces, the beauty of stories; that of the creatures that make up our common home and which – as Saint Francis teaches us – participate in the praise of the Most High.

I thank you, dear young people, artists and sportspeople, for not forgetting to be custodians of this beauty, that the Nativity of the Lord makes shine in every daily gesture of love, sharing and service. Thank you, and best wishes to you and your families!

[1] *Message for the launch of the Global Compact on Education*, 12 September 2019.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] *Message to artists*, 8 December 1965, no. 4.
