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Audience with the Directors and Staff of the Vatican Inspectorate of Public Security

The following is the Holy Father Francis' address to the directors and staff of the Vatican Inspectorate of Public Security, whom he received this morning in audience in the Vatican Apostolic Palace:

Address of the Holy Father

Mr. Chief of Police

Mr. Prefect and Mr. Director,

Dear Officers and Agents!

Good morning, and welcome!

I am glad to greet every one of you on this occasion, and my thoughts also go to your families and colleagues who are not present. Thank you to the chaplains, who support you spiritually. I am grateful to you, Mr. Chief of Police, for the kind words you have addressed to me, also on behalf of the representatives of the central and peripheral structures of the Ministry of the Interior who work with you in a spirit of service and diligent readiness.

This traditional encounter of ours, in the first weeks of the year, is a good opportunity for me to express my esteem and appreciation. In these months, marked by the pandemic, you have been able to adapt your work well, combining the health regulations and the norms of public order with the needs of pilgrims. It is thanks to your professionalism that life around these sacred places and in Vatican City has continued serenely. This is the fruit of your work: thank you. Your vigilance, both day and night, protects those who come to pray in the Basilica, and who come to meet me. Your timely activity also facilitates the spiritual and religious events that take place in the Square, as well as visits by tourists.

It is considerable and delicate task that you carry out with diligence and care, striving to be patient and willing even in the most complex situations. I would also like to recall your steadfast collaboration on the occasion of my movements in Rome or my pastoral visits in Italy. I am grateful to you also for your style: yours is a discreet yet at the same time effective presence, made even more fruitful by your collaboration with the Vatican Gendarmerie. This dialogue between you and the Gendarmerie is very important, and I thank you for advancing it. Besides expressing my gratitude, I would like to encourage you, so that your service, at times arduous, may always be underpinned by a fundamental motivation: that is, taking care of people, and preserving the dignity and safety of each one. This is very precious: the person at the centre, always. Always. And perhaps someone might come with requests or at times problems or demands that are unjust, a bit burdensome at times. But thank you for your patience, and for treating people as they are, in life. This is how God treats us, isn't it? Like this.

In yesterday's liturgy we celebrated the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord in the temple, also known as the "Feast of the encounter". Because the Gospel narrates the encounter of Mary and Joseph, a young couple who have just become parents, with two elderly people, Simeon and Anna. Different generations and histories meet each other, and at the centre of this is Jesus. It comes to mind that you, with your work, also enable many encounters to take place here, in which the Lord is at the centre. He is welcomed in the temple of Jerusalem. Your service allows Jesus to be welcomed again by many people. May Saint Joseph and Our Lady, who introduced him to the temple, watch over you and keep you and your families. To them I entrust the hopes and concerns that you hold in your heart.

I would not like to finish without recalling those of you who have given their lives in service, also in this pandemic. Thank you. Thank you for your witness. They passed away in work, they passed away in silence. But may they not remain in silence in our heart. May they always be remembered with gratitude.

Dear friends, I assure you of remembrance in my prayers. I give you my heartfelt blessing, which I extend to your relatives and loved ones. And I ask you, please, not to forget to pray for me. Thank you.

[Blessing]

Two things: I shall endeavour to greet you standing, all of you, but this knee does not always allow me to do so. I ask you not to be offended if at some point I have to greet you sitting down. And the other thing: the Chief of Police mentioned the *statio orbis* of March 2020, when we asked the Lord to help us with the pandemic. The Dicastery for Communication produced a book. After hearing that, I asked my secretary to go and find the book and to give one to each of you. I don't know if they will all be available here, but those who don't receive it today will receive it tomorrow or the day after. Thank you.
