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Audience with employees of the Holy See and the Governorate of Vatican City State for the exchange of Christmas greetings

This morning, in the Paul VI Hall, the Holy Father Francis met with the employees of the Holy See and the Governorate of Vatican City State, with their families, for the exchange of Christmas wishes.

The following are the words of greeting addressed by the Pope to those present:

Greeting of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

Once again this year, Christmas brings us together to exchange greetings. Thank you for coming, also with your families!

Contemplating together the Mystery of Jesus' birth, it is beautiful to be able to grasp God's style, which is not grandiose or noisy but, on the contrary, is the style of *hiddenness* and *smallness*. Two important words: hiddenness and smallness. They convey to us the meek trait of God, who does not come to us to terrify us with His greatness or to impose Himself with His magnificence, but makes Himself present in the most ordinary way possible, by making Himself one of us.

Hiddenness and smallness. God conceals himself in the smallest of a Child who is born, to a couple – Mary and Joseph – who are far from the spotlight, in the poverty of a stable because there was no room for them in the lodging. These are the distinctive traits of the Son of God, who will then present himself to the world as a tiny seed that dies, hidden in the earth, to bear fruit. He is the God of the small and the last, and with Him, we all learn the road to travel in order to enter the Kingdom of God: not an overt and artificial religiosity, but by becoming small, like children.

You, dear friends, know these two words well. Your work here in the Vatican is carried out mostly in daily concealment, often pursuing things that may seem insignificant and which instead contribute to offering a service to the Church and to society. I thank you for this, and I hope you will be able to continue your work with a spirit of gratitude, with serenity and humility, and precisely there, in the relations with your colleagues, bearing Christian witness. Here too, indeed first of all here, there is a need – isn't there? – for this Christian witness. Look at the hiddenness and smallness of Jesus in the grotto; look at the simplicity of the Nativity scene you have made at home; and be sure that goodness, even when it is concealed and invisible, grows without making noise. Goodness grows without making noise, it multiplies in an unexpected way, and spreads the perfume of joy. Do not forget this: goodness grows without making noise and gives that peace, that joy to the heart, that is so beautiful.

I would like to wish this style – hiddenness and smallness – to your families and your children too. Today we live in a time that sometimes seems obsessed with appearance; everyone tries to showcase themselves. To be seen, especially via the so-called social media. It is a little like wanting precious crystal glasses without caring if the wine is good. Good wine is drunk in a normal glass. But in families, appearances and masks do not count – in the family everything is known – or in any case they do not last long; what counts is that the good wine of love, tenderness, and mutual compassion is not lacking. And this is God's style: closeness, compassion and tenderness. And love – as we well know – does not make noise. We live it in the hiddenness and smallness of daily gestures, of the attention we know how to exchange. This I wish to you: to be attentive, in your homes and in your families, to the little everyday things, to the little gestures of gratitude, to the thoughtfulness of caring. Looking at the Nativity scene, we can imagine the thoughtfulness, the tenderness of Mary and Joseph for the Child who is born. I would like to wish this style to all of you.

Dear sisters and dear brothers, I wish you all the best for a holy Christmas. It is a wish I extend also to your children, to your relatives, to the elderly who live with you, especially your loved ones who are ill. Brothers and sisters, let us open our hearts to joy: the Lord is coming in our midst! Merry Christmas to you all! And please, pray for me. Thank you!
