The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO THE MANAGEMENT AND STAFF OF THE OFFICE RESPONSIBLE
FOR PUBLIC SECURITY AT THE VATICAN

Clementine Hall
Thursday, 17 January 2019

[Multimedia]

Mr. Chief of Police
Mr. Prefect and Mr. Director
Dear Officials and Agents!

It is always a pleasant appointment, this meeting at the beginning of the year with you, representatives of the Inspectorate for Public Security at the Vatican. I welcome you with affection and respect, and reiterate to all of you my deep gratitude for the commendable service you provide daily to the Apostolic See and to Vatican City. I thank the Chief of Police for the kind words he has addressed to me on your behalf; I welcome and congratulate the prefect Felice Colombrino and the director Luigi Carnevale, who have recently assumed their roles. And I greet each of you, offering sincere wishes for a new year rich in the human and Christian values that make life beautiful and fruitful.

The festivities of Christmas and the Epiphany, which we have celebrated just recently, have given us the opportunity to reflect once more on the event of the birth and manifestation of Christ on earth. His coming in our midst reveals to us the unthinkable closeness of God to man and the immense love He has for us. His presence gives meaning to our life and stimulates hope in us, helping us to look beyond everyday difficulties and problems. At the same time, it urges us to charity, to living our relations with a fraternal and merciful attitude, especially with people who suffer as a result of disease, abandonment and marginalization.

The attitude of closeness to people is typical also of your work, and you have the possibility of bearing witness to it every day. By vocation, you are specialists in closeness. Thanks to your valuable work of surveillance and maintenance of public order, you facilitate the visit of the pilgrims and tourists – each one with his or her own story – who come to Saint Peter's Basilica from every part of the world. Your competence and wisdom in facing various situations, even the most critical, is commonly acknowledged; for this too I pay homage to you. I thank you very much for your professionalism and your generosity! I urge you to persevere and seek the best in your operational style, striving to welcome everyone with great patience and understanding, even in those moments when you feel the weariness or burden of unpleasant situations.

Your daily service is intended to keep watch over Saint Peter's Square and Vatican appurtenances day and night; you are present in all weather conditions, favourable or adverse. When I think of your willingness and your spirit of sacrifice, I feel admiration and edification, and also a little shame when I think of the many people who declare themselves Christians and who do not live up your example. Also, I cannot forget, your effective collaboration in my pastoral visits to the parishes and other communities of Rome, as well as during my travels to other Italian locations. I am very grateful for all this.

The Chief of Police also spoke about the sense of belonging: there is the danger of losing it in this society. You protect the Square, you protect my trips, you protect many things, but I will ask you a favour: make an effort also to protect the *cultural roots* of the city, of the homeland, of culture. This civilization risks becoming "uprooted", and we know that without roots one does not grow, and "what the tree has visibly in bloom thrives on what is buried beneath" (cf. F.L. Bernardez, *Para recobrar*). And make an effort in this: protect the roots, because it is the roots that give identity. Our identity is that of today, but it comes from the roots, and will be transmitted to our children, to our grandchildren, but always from the roots. Thank you for doing this.

Dear friends, I entrust each of you to the maternal intercession of Mary Most Holy. May she always be close to your work and support your families, to whom I address a special thought. I ask you, please, to pray for me; I wish you a happy new year and I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing to you and to those dear to you. Thank you.

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