



The Holy See

MEETING WITH THE PERSONNEL OF THE HOLY SEE AND OF THE VATICAN CITY STATE
WITH THEIR FAMILIES

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

*Paul VI Audience Hall
Monday, 22 December 2014*

[Multimedia]

“It was pride that changed angels into devils; it is humility that makes men equal to angels” (St Augustine)

Beloved Co-workers, Good morning!

Beloved Curia Employees — not Curia insubordinates, as someone inadvertently defined you, through a typographical error — !

A little while ago I met the Heads of the Dicasteries and the Superiors of the Roman Curia for the traditional exchange of Christmas greetings, and now I am meeting you, to express to each one of you my sincerest wishes for a true Birth of the Lord.

It is a fact that the vast majority of you are Italian citizens. Therefore, allow me also to address particular, and I would say, proper appreciation to Italians who throughout the history of the Church and of the Roman Curia have worked constantly in a generous and faithful spirit, putting at the service of the Holy See and of the Successor of Peter their own unique industriousness and their filial dedication, offering to the Church great Saints, Popes, martyrs, missionaries, artists, which no fleeting shadow of history could obscure. Thank you very much!

I also thank the people who have come from other countries and work generously in the Curia, far from their homelands and from their families, who represent for the Curia the face of the “catholicity” of the Church.

Having addressed the Superiors of the Roman Curia, comparing it to a Body which is always seeking to be more united and more harmonious in order to mirror, in a certain sense, the *mistico Corpo di Cristo*, namely, the Church, I paternally exhort you to meditate on this text as a source of reflection for a fruitful examination of conscience, in preparation for Holy Christmas and for the New Year. I also exhort you to approach the Sacrament of Confession in a docile spirit, to receive the mercy of the Lord who knocks at the door of our heart, in the joy of the family!

I did not want to let my second Christmas in Rome pass without meeting the people who work in the Curia; without meeting the people who work unseen and who ironically define themselves as “*the unknown, the invisible*”: gardeners, cleaning staff, ushers, office managers, lift operators, minute-writers... and so many, many others. Thanks to your daily commitment and your attentive efforts, the Curia calls itself a living and progressive body: a true mosaic, with a wealth of different necessary and complementary tesserae.

St Paul says, speaking about the Body of Christ, that “the eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you’, nor again the head to the feet, ‘I have no need of you’. On the contrary, the parts of the body which seem to be weaker are indispensable”, — the eyes for example — “and those parts of the body which we think less honourable we invest with the greater honor.... But God has so adjusted the body, giving the greater honour to the inferior part, that there may be no discord in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another” (1 Cor 12:21-25).

Dearest men and women co-workers in the Curia, thinking about St Paul’s words and about you, namely, the people who are part of the Curia and who make it a living, dynamic and well-cared-for Body, I decided to choose the word “*care*” as a reference for this meeting of ours.

To take care means to manifest steadfast and attentive interest, which requires both our mind and our action, toward someone or something; it means to look with attention to those in need of care, without distraction; it means readiness to give or receive care. The image comes to mind of the mother who takes care of her sick child, with total dedication, considering her child’s pain as her own. She never looks at the clock, she never complains of not having slept all night, she only wants to see him better, no matter the cost.

In this time spent in your midst I have been able to discern the care that you devote to your work, and I thank you so very much for this. However, allow me to exhort you to transform this Holy Christmas into a real occasion to “*care*” for every wound and to remedy every deficiency.

For this reason I exhort you to:

- take care of your spiritual life, your relationship with God, because this is the backbone of all that we do and all that we are. A Christian who does not nourish himself with prayer, the Sacraments and the Word of God, inevitably withers and shrivels. Take care of your spiritual

life;

- take care of your family life, giving your children and your dear ones not only money, but most of all time, attention and love;
- take care of your relationships with others, transforming faith into life and words into good works, especially for the most needy;
- take care of your speech, purifying your language of offensive words, of vulgarity and of decadent worldly expressions;
- take care of the wounds of the heart with the oil of forgiveness, forgiving the people who have injured us and treating the injuries that we have inflicted on others;
- take care of your work, performing it with enthusiasm, with humility, with skill, with passion, with a mind that knows how to thank the Lord;
- eliminate envy, concupiscence, hatred and the negative feelings that devour our inner peace and turn us into ruined and destructive people;
- eliminate the rancour that leads us to vengeance, and the laziness that leads us to existential euthanasia, the finger-pointing that leads to arrogance, and the continual complaining that leads us to desperation. I know that sometimes, in order to keep a job, one speaks ill of someone, in order to defend oneself. I understand these situations, but that is the wrong road. In the end we will all be destroyed by ourselves, not this, it is of no use. Instead, ask the Lord for the wisdom to know how to bite one's tongue at times, in order not to say hurtful words, which afterwards leave bitterness in the mouth;
- take care of weakest brothers and sisters; I have seen so many good examples of this among you, and I thank you for this. My compliments! Namely, take care of the elderly, the sick, the hungry, the homeless and foreigners because we will be judged on this;
- ensure that Holy Christmas is never a celebration of commercial consumerism, of appearances or of useless gifts, or of excessive waste, but that it is a celebration of joyfully welcoming the Lord into the crib and into the heart.

Care. To take care of so many things. Each one of us may think: "What is the thing I must take the best care of?". Just think this: "Today I shall take care of this". But most of all take care of the family! The family is a treasure, children are a treasure. One question young parents can ask themselves is: "Do I have time to play with my children, or am I always busy, busy, and have no time for my children?". I leave you this question. Play with your children: it is so beautiful. And this is to sow the future.

Beloved men and women co-workers,

let us imagine how our world would change if each of us started immediately, here and now, to take proper care of our relationship with God and with our neighbour; if we put into practice the golden rule of the Gospel, Jesus proposed in the Sermon on the Mount: "*whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them; for this is the law and the prophets*" (Mt 7:12). If only we could look at others, especially the most needy, with eyes of goodness and tenderness, as God looks at us, awaits us and forgives us; if we could find in humility our strength and our treasure!

And so often we are afraid of tenderness, we are afraid of humility!

This is the true Christmas: the celebration of the poverty of God, who emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant (cf. Phil 2:6); of God who set himself to serve at table (cf. Lk 22:27); of God who hides from the wise and understanding, and who reveals Himself to babes, to the simple and the poor (cf. Mt 11:25); of the “Son of Man who came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (cf. Mk 10:45).

But it is above all the celebration of Peace on earth brought by the Baby Jesus: “*Peace between heaven and earth, peace between all peoples, peace in our hearts*” (liturgical hymn); the peace sung by the angels: “*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men of good will*” (cf. Lk 2:14).

A peace which needs our enthusiasm, our care, to warm cold hearts, to encourage downcast souls and to light up lifeless eyes with the light of Jesus’ face!

With this heartfelt peace I would like to greet you and all your family members. I would also like to express my appreciation to them and give an embrace, above all to your children, and especially to the littlest ones!

I do not want to end these words of best wishes without asking you for forgiveness for the shortcomings, mine and those of my colleagues, and also for any scandals, which cause so much harm. Forgive me.

Happy Christmas and, please, pray for me!

Let us pray to Our Lady: Hail Mary....