



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, 21 December 2015*

[Multimedia]

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Christmas, which is now near, offers us a fine occasion to see each other again and to offer each other warm wishes.

First of all I would like to *thank you for your work*, for your commitment to doing things well, always, even when there is no recognition: so often one does something good and it isn't recognized.... I would like to thank in a particular way those among you who for many years have been doing the same kind of work, a work that is often hidden, and those who try to do things the right way. We know this is normal, it is simply doing one's duty; but we also know that for us human beings it isn't easy, we are not machines — thanks be to God! — and at times we need some incentive or a little change.... I congratulate you who rightly feel pride in doing the normal, everyday things in the best way possible. Thank you! Let us go forward, in the various areas of work, collaborating together with patience, trying to help one another.

As I thank you, I also want to *ask your forgiveness* for the scandals that have taken place in the Vatican. I would like that my attitude and yours, especially in these days, be above all that of prayer, prayer for the people involved in these scandals, that those who have made mistakes may mend their ways and find their way back to the right path.

There is another thing I would like to say to you, perhaps the most important thing: I encourage you to *take care of your marriage and your children*. Take care, do not neglect: play with the children, with your children. Marriage is like a plant. It is not an armoire, which is placed there, in

the room, and it's enough to dust it every once in a while. A plant is alive, and it needs to be cared for every day: to see how it is doing, to give it water, and so it goes. Marriage is a living reality: the life of a couple should never be taken for granted, in any phase of a family's journey. Let us remember that the most precious gifts for children are not things but their parents' love. I do not mean only the parents' love for their children, but the parents' own love *between themselves*, which is the conjugal relationship. This does such good for you and also for your children! Do not overlook your family!

Therefore, before all else, cultivate the "plant" of marriage, which you spouses are, and at the same time take care of your relationship with your children, even here, focusing more on the human relationship than on things. Speak with your children, listen to them, ask them what they think. This dialogue between parents and children does so much good! It makes the children grow in maturity. Let us focus on mercy, in everyday relationships, between husband and wife, between parents and children, between brothers and sisters; and let's take care of grandparents: grandparents are so important in the family. Grandparents have memories, they have wisdom. Never leave grandparents aside! They are very important. A young woman — who has a seven-year-old son and whose 90-year-old grandmother lives with them — told me that the grandmother was not completely well and they advised that she be admitted to a rest home. This wise woman, who had not studied at university, replied to those who told her to put her grandmother in a rest home: "No! I want my son to grow up beside his grandma!". She knew the good that grandparents do for their grandchildren.

Foster peace in the family: arguments happen in families, we all know. But when there is no arguing in a marriage it seems abnormal. The important thing is that you do not end the day without making peace. Siblings don't argue? Always! But make peace. You parents, when your children have an argument, before they go to bed, tell them: "Make peace, shake hands, give each other a kiss". It is important to learn the wisdom of making peace. Have you waged war during the day? Is this war still heated? Don't let it cool down: because a "cold war" the day after is more dangerous than a "heated war". Do you understand? Make peace in the evening, always!

The Jubilee should also be experienced in the domestic church, not only in the big events! Instead, the Lord loves those who practice mercy under ordinary circumstances. This is what I want to wish you: that you may experience the joy of mercy, beginning with your family.

Thank you for your work. Forgiveness for the scandals. Go forward. Go forward in this community and bring my greeting and my wishes to your loved ones, to the elderly and to the sick. And please continue to pray for me. Thank you again and merry Christmas!

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