



The Holy See

URBI ET ORBI MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE BENEDICT XVI

CHRISTMAS 2005

"I bring you good news of a great joy ... for to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord" (Lk 2:10-11). Last night we heard once more the Angel's message to the shepherds, and we experienced anew the atmosphere of that holy Night, Bethlehem Night, when the Son of God became man, was born in a lowly stable and dwelt among us. On this solemn day, the Angel's proclamation rings out once again, inviting us, the men and women of the third millennium, to welcome the Saviour. May the people of today's world not hesitate to let him enter their homes, their cities, their nations, everywhere on earth! In the millennium just past, and especially in the last centuries, immense progress was made in the areas of technology and science. Today we can dispose of vast material resources. But the men and women in our technological age risk becoming victims of their own intellectual and technical achievements, ending up in spiritual barrenness and emptiness of heart. That is why it is so important for us to open our minds and hearts to the Birth of Christ, this event of salvation which can give new hope to the life of each human being. *Wake up, O man! For your sake God became man" (Saint Augustine, *Sermo*, 185. Wake up, O men and women of the third millennium!* At Christmas, the Almighty becomes a child and asks for our help and protection. His way of showing that he is God challenges our way of being human. By knocking at our door, he challenges us and our freedom; he calls us to examine how we understand and live our lives. The modern age is often seen as an awakening of reason from its slumbers, humanity's enlightenment after an age of darkness. Yet without the light of Christ, the light of reason is not sufficient to enlighten humanity and the world. For this reason, the words of the Christmas Gospel: "the true Light that enlightens every man was coming into this world" (*Jn 1:9*) resound now more than ever as a proclamation of salvation. "It is only in the mystery of the Word made flesh that the mystery of humanity truly becomes clear" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 22). The Church does not tire of repeating this message of hope reaffirmed by the Second Vatican Council, which concluded forty years ago. Men and women of today, humanity come of age yet often still so frail in mind and will, let the Child of Bethlehem take you by the hand!

Do not fear; put your trust in him! The life-giving power of his light is an incentive for building a new world order based on just ethical and economic relationships. May his love guide every people on earth and strengthen their common consciousness of being a "family" called to foster relationships of trust and mutual support. A united humanity will be able to confront the many troubling problems of the present time: from the menace of terrorism to the humiliating poverty in which millions of human beings live, from the proliferation of weapons to the pandemics and the environmental destruction which threatens the future of our planet. May the God who became man out of love for humanity strengthen all those in Africa who work for peace, integral development and the prevention of fratricidal conflicts, for the consolidation of the present, still fragile political transitions, and the protection of the most elementary rights of those experiencing tragic humanitarian crises, such as those in Darfur and in other regions of central Africa. May he lead the peoples of Latin America to live in peace and harmony. May he grant courage to people of good will in the Holy Land, in Iraq, in Lebanon, where signs of hope, which are not lacking, need to be confirmed by actions inspired by fairness and wisdom; may he favour the process of dialogue on the Korean peninsula and elsewhere in the countries of Asia, so that, by the settlement of dangerous disputes, consistent and peaceful conclusions can be reached in a spirit of friendship, conclusions which their peoples expectantly await. At Christmas we contemplate God made man, divine glory hidden beneath the poverty of a Child wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger; the Creator of the Universe reduced to the helplessness of an infant. Once we accept this paradox, we discover the Truth that sets us free and the Love that transforms our lives. On Bethlehem Night, the Redeemer becomes one of us, our companion along the precarious paths of history. Let us take the hand which he stretches out to us: it is a hand which seeks to take nothing from us, but only to give. With the shepherds let us enter the stable of Bethlehem beneath the loving gaze of Mary, the silent witness of his miraculous birth. May she help us to experience the happiness of Christmas, may she teach us how to treasure in our hearts the mystery of God who for our sake became man; and may she help us to bear witness in our world to his truth, his love and his peace.