



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE CHILDREN OF ITALIAN CATHOLIC ACTION***

Consistory Hall

Saturday, 19 December 2009

Dear young people of ACR,

I greet you with deep affection. It is always a pleasure for me to meet with you on this annual pre-Christmas occasion, so anticipated and desired by you all and also by me. I cordially greet the National President of the Italian Catholic Action, Dr Franco Miano, and General Chaplain, Mons. Domenico Sigalini. Through them, I thank those who work generously for your religious and human formation, dedicating time and personal resources to your praiseworthy Association.

I am aware that this year you are dedicated in particular to the theme "We Are On the Air", in order to put yourselves in touch with Jesus and with others, using as a reference point the Biblical image of Zacchaeus, who encounters the Lord and welcomes him with joy. You too are small like Zacchaeus, who climbed into a tree because he wanted to see Jesus. But the Lord, lifting his gaze, noticed him immediately among the crowd. Even if you are little, even if at times adults do not take you into consideration as you would like, Jesus sees you and hears you. Not only does Jesus see you, but he "tunes in" to your "wavelength"; he wants to come to visit you, to stay with you, to build a strong friendship with each one of you. This is what he did when he was born in Bethlehem, making himself close to the youth and adults of every age, and also to each one of us.

Dear friends, in front of Jesus may you always imitate the example of Zacchaeus, who promptly came down from the tree, welcomed him joyfully into his house and from then on could not stop celebrating him! Welcome him into your lives every day: in your games and activities and in your prayers; when he asks for your friendship and your generosity; when you are happy and when you are afraid. On Christmas, once again, your friend Jesus comes to meet you and calls you! He is the Son of God, the Lord whom you see every day in the images present in churches, along the roads, in your houses. He always speaks to you of the "greatest" love, which can give itself without

limits, to bring peace and forgiveness.

Only the presence of Jesus in your lives can give you complete happiness, because he is capable of making all things ever new and beautiful. He never forgets you. If you tell him every day that you are "on the air", you may rest assured that he will contact you to send you a caring message of friendship and affection. He does this when you participate in Holy Mass; when you dedicate yourselves to study and to your daily tasks; and when you carry out acts of sharing and of solidarity, generosity and love for others. In this way you will be able to tell your friends, your parents, your animators and your teachers that you have succeeded in "connecting" with Jesus in your prayers; while accomplishing your duties; and when you will be able to stand beside the many boys and girls who suffer, especially those who come from distant countries and often are abandoned, without parents or friends.

Dear young people, with these thoughts I wish you a happy and Holy Christmas. As I extend my good wishes to your families and all of Catholic Action, entrusting you to the protection of the Mother of God, I bless you all wholeheartedly.

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