



The Holy See

TE DEUM AND FIRST VESPERS

OF THE SOLEMNITY OF MARY, MOTHER OF GOD

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

St Peter's Basilica

Friday, 31 December 2010

[\(Video\)](#)

[Photo Gallery](#)

Dear Brothers and Sisters, At the end of a year we meet this evening in the Vatican Basilica to celebrate First Vespers of the Solemnity of Mary Most Holy Mother of God and to raise a hymn of thanksgiving for the innumerable graces she has given us, but also and above all for Grace in person, namely for the living and personal Gift of the Father which is his beloved Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ. It is this gratitude for the gifts received from God in the time we are granted to live that helps us to discover a great value inscribed in time: marked in its annual, monthly, weekly and daily seasons, it is inhabited by the love of God, by his gifts of grace; it is the time of salvation. Yes, eternal God has entered and remains in human time. He has entered and remains in it with the Person of Jesus, the Son of God made man, the Saviour of the world. It is of this that the Apostle Paul has reminded us in the brief Reading just proclaimed: "When the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son... so that we might receive adoption as sons" (Gal 4:4-5). Thus the Eternal enters time and renews it from the roots, freeing man from sin and making him a son of God. Already "in the beginning", that is, with the creation of the world and of man in the world, the eternity of God caused time — in which human history takes place from generation to generation — to unfold. With the coming of Christ and with his redemption, we are now in the time that has "fully come". As St Paul points out, with Jesus time fully comes, it reaches fulfilment, acquiring that meaning of salvation and grace for which it was desired by God before the creation of the world. Christmas reminds us of this "fullness" of time, in other words of the renewing salvation which Jesus brought to all mankind. It reminds us of it and, mysteriously but really, gives it to us ever anew. Our human time is full of evil, of suffering, every kind of tragedy — from those caused by the wickedness of human beings to those that derive from inauspicious natural events, — but henceforth and in a definitive and indelible manner it contains the joyful and liberating newness of Christ the Saviour. Precisely in the Child of Bethlehem we can contemplate in a particularly luminous and eloquent way the encounter of eternity with time, as the Church's Liturgy likes to express it. Christmas makes us rediscover God in the humble, frail flesh of a Child. Is this not perhaps an invitation to rediscover God's presence and his love which gives salvation even in the brief and stressful hours of our daily life? Is it not perhaps an invitation to discover that our human time — even in difficult and demanding

moments — is ceaselessly enriched by the Lord's grace, indeed by Grace, which is the Lord himself? At the end of this year 2010, before consigning the days and hours to God and to his just and merciful judgement, I feel the need in my heart to raise our "thank you" to him for his love for us. In this atmosphere of gratitude, I would like to address a special greeting to the Cardinal Vicar, to the Auxiliary Bishops, to the priests, to the consecrated people, as well as to the many lay faithful who are gathered here. I greet Hon. Mr Mayor and the Authorities present. A special remembrance goes to all those who are in difficulty and are spending these days of festivity in hardship and suffering. I assure each and every one of my affectionate thoughts, which I accompany with prayer. Dear brothers and sisters, our Church of Rome is committed to helping all the baptized to live faithfully the vocation they have received and to witness to the beauty of faith. In order to be authentic disciples of Christ, an essential aid comes to us in the daily meditation of the word of God which "is the basis", as I wrote in my recent Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini* "of all authentic Christian spirituality" (n. 86). For this reason I wish to encourage everyone to cultivate an intense relationship with it, in particular through the *lectio divina*, in order to have that light we need to discern the signs of God in the present time and to proclaim the Gospel effectively. In Rome too, in fact, there is an ever greater need for a renewed proclamation of the Gospel so that the hearts of our city's inhabitants may be opened to the encounter with that Child, who was born for us, with Christ, Redeemer of man. For, as the Apostle Paul recalls: "faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ" (Rom 10:17), a useful help in this evangelizing action can come — as was previously experienced during the City Mission in preparation for the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 — from "Centres for listening to the Gospel", whose refoundation or revitalization I encourage, not only in condominiums but also in hospitals, in work places and in those where the new generations are formed and where culture is elaborated. Indeed, the Word of God became flesh for all and his truth is accessible to every human being and to every culture. I learned with appreciation of the most recent commitment of the Vicariate in organizing the "Dialogues in the Cathedral", which have been held in the Basilica of St John Lateran. These important meetings express the Church's desire to encounter all those who are in search of answers to the deep questioning of human life. The privileged place for listening to the Word of God is the celebration of the Eucharist. The Diocesan Convention last June, in which I took part, wanted to highlight the centrality of Holy Mass on Sundays in the life of every Christian community and offered guidelines so that the beauty of the divine mysteries might be more resplendent in the celebrative act and in the spiritual fruits that derive from it. I encourage parish priests and priests to put into practice what was pointed out in the pastoral programme: the formation of a liturgical group to animate the celebration and a catechesis that helps everyone to become better acquainted with the Eucharistic Mystery from which flows the witness of charity. Nourished by Christ, we too are attracted by the very act of total giving that impelled the Lord to give his life itself, revealing in this way the immense love of the Father. The witness of charity therefore possesses an essential theological dimension and is profoundly united with the proclamation of the word. At this celebration of thanksgiving to God for the gifts received during the year, I remember in particular the Visit I made to the Caritas Hostel at Termini Station, where, through the service and generous dedication of numerous volunteers, so many men and women can tangibly feel God's love. The present time is still giving rise to anxiety about the precarious plight of many families and asks the entire diocesan community to be close to those who are living in conditions of poverty and hardship. May God, infinite Love, enflame the heart of each one of us with that love which impelled him to give us his Only-Begotten Son. Dear brothers and sisters, we are asked to look to the future and to look to it with that hope [trust] which is the last word of the "Te Deum": "*In te, Domine, speravi: non confundar in aeternum!*" — O Lord, in you have I trusted, let me never be confounded". It is always Mary Most Holy, Mother of God, who gives us Christ our Hope. May her arms, and especially her heart, continue to offer to the world Jesus, her Son and our Saviour, as they did to the shepherds and to the Magi. All our hope is in him, because salvation and peace came from him for every human being. Amen.

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