



# The Holy See

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TE DEUM AND FIRST VESPERS

OF THE SOLEMNITY OF MARY, MOTHER OF GOD

**HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI** *St Peter's Basilica*

*Monday, 31 December 2012*

[\[Video\]](#)

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*Your Eminences,*

*Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and in the Presbyterate,*

*Distinguished Authorities,*

*Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

I thank all of you who have wished to take part in this liturgy of the last hour of the year of the Lord 2012. This “hour” has a special intensity and in a certain way sums up all the hours of the year that is about to end. I cordially greet the cardinals, bishops, priests, consecrated persons and lay faithful, especially those who represent the ecclesial community of Rome. In a special way I greet all the authorities present, starting with the mayor of the city, and I thank them for having come to share with us this moment of prayer and thanksgiving to God.

The *Te Deum* we are raising to the Lord this evening, at the end of a solar year, is a hymn of thanksgiving that opens with praise: “We praise you, O God: We acclaim you as Lord” — and ends with a profession of trust — “in you, Lord, we put our trust; we shall not be put to shame”. However the year went, whether it was easy or difficult, barren or fruitful, let us give thanks to God. Indeed the *Te Deum* contains deep wisdom, that wisdom which makes us say that in spite of all good exists in the world and that this good is bound to win thanks be to God, the God of Jesus Christ, who was born, died and rose again.

At times of course it is hard to understand this profound reality, because evil is noisier than goodness; an atrocious murder, widespread violence, grave forms of injustice hit the headlines; whereas acts of love and service, the daily effort sustained with fidelity and patience are often left in the dark, they pass unnoticed. For this reason too, we cannot stop at reading the news if we

wish to understand the world and life; we must be able to pause in silence, in meditation, in calm, prolonged reflection; we must know how to stop and think. In this way our mind can find healing from the inevitable wounds of daily life, it can penetrate the events that occur in our life and in the world and can attain that wisdom which makes it possible to see things with new eyes.

It is above all in the recollection of the conscience that God speaks to us, so that we can learn to evaluate truthfully our own actions and also the evil present within us and around us. In this way we are able to start out afresh on a journey of conversion that makes us wiser and better people, more capable of generating solidarity and communion and of overcoming evil with good.

Christians are people of hope, even and above all when they face the darkness that often exists in the world and has nothing to do with God's plan but is the result of the erroneous choices of human beings, for Christians know that the power of faith can move mountains (cf. Mt 17:20): The Lord can illuminate even the thickest darkness.

The Year of Faith, which the Church is living, aims to inspire in every believer's heart a greater awareness that the encounter with Christ is the fount of true life and of sound hope. Faith in Jesus makes possible a constant renewal in goodness, as well as the ability to extricate ourselves from the quicksands of sin and to start out afresh.

In the Word made flesh it is possible, ever anew, to find the true identity of the human being who realizes that he or she is the recipient of God's infinite love and is called to personal communion with him. The truth that Jesus Christ came to reveal is the certainty that urges us to look with trust to the year we are about to begin.

The Church, which received the mission to evangelize from her Lord, knows well that the Gospel is destined for all people — and in particular for the new generations — to quench that thirst for truth which all people carry in their heart and which is all too often obscured by the many things that fill life. This apostolic commitment is all the more necessary when faith risks being clouded over in cultural contexts that prevent it from taking root in individuals and from being present in society.

Rome too is a city where the Christian faith must be proclaimed ever anew and demands a credible witness.

On the one hand, the growing number of believers of other religions, the difficulty of parish communities in approaching youth and the spread of lifestyles impressed with individualism and ethical relativism; and, on the other, the search of so many people for meaning in their life and for a hope that does not disappoint cannot leave us indifferent. Like the Apostle Paul (cf. Rom 1:14-15), each and every member of the faithful in this city must feel that they owe it to the other inhabitants to spread the Gospel!

For this very reason, our Diocese has been committed for several years now to highlighting the missionary dimension of ordinary pastoral care, so that believers, sustained especially by the Sunday Eucharist, may become consistent disciples and witnesses of Jesus Christ. Christian parents, who are the first to inculcate the faith in their children, are called in a very special way to this consistency of life.

The complexity of life in a large city like Rome and in a culture that frequently seems indifferent to God, makes it obligatory not to leave fathers and mothers alone in this most crucial task; on the contrary, it obliges us to sustain them and to accompany them in their spiritual life.

With this in mind I encourage all those who work in family ministry to implement the pastoral guidelines that resulted from the last Diocesan Convention dedicated to baptismal and post-baptismal pastoral care. To keep the flame of faith alive we need a generous commitment to developing programmes of spiritual formation to accompany parents after the Baptism of their children and to offer them practical suggestions so that, from the most tender age, the Gospel of Jesus may be proclaimed.

The creation of family groups in which people listen to the word of God and share their experiences of Christian life helps to reinforce their feeling of belonging to the ecclesial community and helps them to develop in friendship with the Lord. It is likewise important also to build a relationship of cordial friendship with those members of the faithful who, having had their child baptized, distracted by the pressing needs of daily life, do not show much interest in following up this experience: thus they will be able to feel the affection of the Church which, like a caring mother, sets herself beside them to encourage them in their spiritual life.

In order to proclaim the Gospel and to enable all who do not yet know Jesus, or who have abandoned him, to cross the threshold of the door of faith once again and to live communion with God, it is indispensable to know in depth the meaning of the truths contained in the Profession of Faith.

Therefore the commitment to provide pastoral workers with a systematic formation that has existed in the various Prefectures of the Diocese of Rome is a precious means that must be pursued with commitment in the future too, to form lay people who can readily echo the Gospel in every home and in every walk of life. This may also be done through “listening centres” which proved so effective at the time of the City Mission.

In this regard the “Dialogues in the Cathedral” which have been held for years in the Basilica of St John Lateran are an especially appropriate experience for meeting the city and for having a dialogue with all those in search of God and of the truth who are wondering about the great questions of human life.

As in past centuries, so today too the Church of Rome is called to proclaim and to witness tirelessly to the riches of Christ's Gospel. Moreover she is called to do this by supporting those who live in situations of poverty and marginalization, as well as families in difficulty, especially when they have to help sick and disabled people. I feel confident that the institutions, at their various levels, will not fail in their action to ensure that all citizens have access to what they need to live a dignified life.

Dear friends, on the last evening of the year which is coming to its end and on the threshold of the new one, let us praise the Lord! Let us express to "the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come" (Rev 1:8), repentance and the request for forgiveness for our shortcomings, as well as sincere gratitude for the innumerable benefits granted to us by the divine Good. In particular, let us thank him for the grace and truth that have come to us through Jesus Christ. In him lies the fullness of all human time. In him lies the future of every human being. In him will be brought about the fulfilment of the hopes of the Church and of the world. Amen.

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