



The Holy See

URBI ET ORBI MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE BENEDICT XVI

CHRISTMAS 2010

(Video)

“Verbum caro factum est” – “The Word became flesh” (*Jn 1:14*).

Dear brothers and sisters listening to me here in Rome and throughout the world, I joyfully proclaim the message of Christmas: God became man; he came to dwell among us. God is not distant: he is “Emmanuel”, God-with-us. He is no stranger: he has a face, the face of Jesus.

This message is ever new, ever surprising, for it surpasses even our most daring hope. First of all, because it is not merely a proclamation: it is an event, a happening, which credible witnesses saw, heard and touched in the person of Jesus of Nazareth! Being in his presence, observing his works and hearing his words, they recognized in Jesus the Messiah; and seeing him risen, after his crucifixion, they were certain that he was true man and true God, the only-begotten Son come from the Father, full of grace and truth (cf. *Jn 1:14*).

“The Word became flesh”. Before this revelation we once more wonder: how can this be? The Word and the flesh are mutually opposed realities; how can the eternal and almighty Word become a frail and mortal man? There is only one answer: Love. Those who love desire to share with the beloved, they want to be one with the beloved, and Sacred Scripture shows us the great love story of God for his people which culminated in Jesus Christ.

God in fact does not change: he is faithful to himself. He who created the world is the same one who called Abraham and revealed his name to Moses: “I am who I am ... the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob ... a God merciful and gracious, abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness (cf. *Ex 3:14-15; 34:6*). God does not change; he is Love, ever and always. In himself he is communion, unity in Trinity, and all his words and works are directed to communion. The Incarnation is the culmination of creation. When Jesus, the Son of God incarnate, was formed in

the womb of Mary by the will of the Father and the working of the Holy Spirit, creation reached its high point. The ordering principle of the universe, the *Logos*, began to exist in the world, in a certain time and space.

“The Word became flesh”. The light of this truth is revealed to those who receive it in faith, for it is a mystery of love. Only those who are open to love are enveloped in the light of Christmas. So it was on that night in Bethlehem, and so it is today. The Incarnation of the Son of God is an event which occurred within history, while at the same time transcending history. In the night of the world a new light was kindled, one which lets itself be seen by the simple eyes of faith, by the meek and humble hearts of those who await the Saviour. If the truth were a mere mathematical formula, in some sense it would impose itself by its own power. But if Truth is Love, it calls for faith, for the “yes” of our hearts.

And what do our hearts, in effect, seek, if not a Truth which is also Love? Children seek it with their questions, so disarming and stimulating; young people seek it in their eagerness to discover the deepest meaning of their life; adults seek it in order to guide and sustain their commitments in the family and the workplace; the elderly seek it in order to grant completion to their earthly existence.

“The Word became flesh”. The proclamation of Christmas is also a light for all peoples, for the collective journey of humanity. “Emmanuel”, God-with-us, has come as King of justice and peace. We know that his Kingdom is not of this world, and yet it is more important than all the kingdoms of this world. It is like the leaven of humanity: were it lacking, the energy to work for true development would flag: the impulse to work together for the common good, in the disinterested service of our neighbour, in the peaceful struggle for justice. Belief in the God who desired to share in our history constantly encourages us in our own commitment to that history, for all its contradictions. It is a source of hope for everyone whose dignity is offended and violated, since the one born in Bethlehem came to set every man and woman free from the source of all enslavement.

May the light of Christmas shine forth anew in the Land where Jesus was born, and inspire Israelis and Palestinians to strive for a just and peaceful coexistence. May the comforting message of the coming of Emmanuel ease the pain and bring consolation amid their trials to the beloved Christian communities in Iraq and throughout the Middle East; may it bring them comfort and hope for the future and bring the leaders of nations to show them effective solidarity. May it also be so for those in Haiti who still suffer in the aftermath of the devastating earthquake and the recent cholera epidemic. May the same hold true not only for those in Colombia and Venezuela, but also in Guatemala and Costa Rica, who recently suffered natural disasters.

May the birth of the Saviour open horizons of lasting peace and authentic progress for the peoples of Somalia, Darfur and Côte d’Ivoire; may it promote political and social stability in Madagascar; may it bring security and respect for human rights in Afghanistan and in Pakistan; may it

encourage dialogue between Nicaragua and Costa Rica; and may it advance reconciliation on the Korean peninsula.

May the birth of the Saviour strengthen the spirit of faith, patience and courage of the faithful of the Church in mainland China, that they may not lose heart through the limitations imposed on their freedom of religion and conscience but, persevering in fidelity to Christ and his Church, may keep alive the flame of hope. May the love of “God-with-us” grant perseverance to all those Christian communities enduring discrimination and persecution, and inspire political and religious leaders to be committed to full respect for the religious freedom of all.

Dear brothers and sisters, “the Word became flesh”; he came to dwell among us; he is Emmanuel, the God who became close to us. Together let us contemplate this great mystery of love; let our hearts be filled with the light which shines in the stable of Bethlehem! To everyone, a Merry Christmas!