



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE ROMAN CURIA
OFFERING THEM HIS CHRISTMAS GREETINGS***

Thursday, 22 December 2005

*Your Eminences,
Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and in the Presbyterate,
Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

*"Expergiscere, homo: quia pro te Deus factus est homo - Wake up, O man! For your sake God became man" (St Augustine, *Sermo*, 185). With the Christmas celebrations now at hand, I am opening my Meeting with you, dear collaborators of the Roman Curia, with St Augustine's invitation to understand the true meaning of Christ's Birth.*

I address to each one my most cordial greeting and I thank you for the sentiments of devotion and affection, effectively conveyed to me by your Cardinal Dean, to whom I address my gratitude.

God became man for our sake: this is the message which, every year, from the silent grotto of Bethlehem spreads even to the most out-of-the-way corners of the earth. Christmas is a feast of light and peace, it is a day of inner wonder and joy that expands throughout the universe, because "God became man". From the humble grotto of Bethlehem, the eternal Son of God, who became a tiny Child, addresses each one of us: he calls us, invites us to be reborn in him so that, with him, we may live eternally in communion with the Most Holy Trinity.

Our hearts brimming with the joy that comes from this knowledge, let us think back to the events of the year that is coming to an end. We have behind us great events which have left a deep mark on the life of the Church. I am thinking first and foremost of the departure of our beloved Holy Father

John Paul II, preceded by a long period of suffering and the gradual loss of speech. No Pope has left us such a quantity of texts as he has bequeathed to us; no previous Pope was able to visit the whole world like him and speak directly to people from all the continents.

In the end, however, his lot was a journey of suffering and silence. Unforgettable for us are the images of Palm Sunday when, holding an olive branch and marked by pain, he came to the window and imparted the Lord's Blessing as he himself was about to walk towards the Cross.

Next was the scene in his Private Chapel when, holding the Crucifix, he took part in the Way of the Cross at the Colosseum, where he had so often led the procession carrying the Cross himself.

Lastly came his silent Blessing on Easter Sunday, in which we saw the promise of the Resurrection, of eternal life, shine out through all his suffering. With his words and actions, the Holy Father gave us great things; equally important is the lesson he imparted to us from the chair of suffering and silence.

In his last book "*Memory and Identity*" (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2005), he has left us an interpretation of suffering that is not a theological or philosophical theory but a fruit that matured on his personal path of suffering which he walked, sustained by faith in the Crucified Lord. This interpretation, which he worked out in faith and which gave meaning to his suffering lived in communion with that of the Lord, spoke through his silent pain, transforming it into an important message.

Both at the beginning and once again at the end of the book mentioned, the Pope shows that he is deeply touched by the spectacle of the power of evil, which we dramatically experienced in the century that has just ended. He says in his text: "The evil... was not a small-scale evil.... It was an evil of gigantic proportions, an evil which availed itself of state structures in order to accomplish its wicked work, an evil built up into a system" (p. 189).

Might evil be invincible? Is it the ultimate power of history? Because of the experience of evil, for Pope Wojty³a the question of redemption became the essential and central question of his life and thought as a Christian. Is there a limit against which the power of evil shatters? "Yes, there is", the Pope replies in this book of his, as well as in his Encyclical on redemption.

The power that imposes a limit on evil is Divine Mercy. Violence, the display of evil, is opposed in history - as "the totally other" of God, God's own power - by Divine Mercy. The Lamb is stronger than the dragon, we could say together with the Book of Revelation.

At the end of the book, in a retrospective review of the attack of 13 May 1981 and on the basis of the experience of his journey with God and with the world, John Paul II further deepened this answer.

What limits the force of evil, the power, in brief, which overcomes it - this is how he says it - is God's suffering, the suffering of the Son of God on the Cross: "The suffering of the Crucified God is not just one form of suffering alongside others.... In sacrificing himself for us all, Christ gave a new meaning to suffering, opening up a new dimension, a new order: the order of love.... The passion of Christ on the Cross gave a radically new meaning to suffering, transforming it from within.... It is this suffering which burns and consumes evil with the flame of love.... All human suffering, all pain, all infirmity contains within itself a promise of salvation;... evil is present in the world partly so as to awaken our love, our self-gift in generous and disinterested service to those visited by suffering.... Christ has redeemed the world: "By his wounds we are healed" (Is 53: 5)" (p. 189, ff.).

All this is not merely learned theology, but the expression of a faith lived and matured through suffering. Of course, we must do all we can to alleviate suffering and prevent the injustice that causes the suffering of the innocent. However, we must also do the utmost to ensure that people can discover the meaning of suffering and are thus able to accept their own suffering and to unite it with the suffering of Christ.

In this way, it is merged with redemptive love and consequently becomes a force against the evil in the world.

The response across the world to the Pope's death was an overwhelming demonstration of gratitude for the fact that in his ministry he offered himself totally to God for the world; a thanksgiving for the fact that in a world full of hatred and violence he taught anew love and suffering in the service of others; he showed us, so to speak, in the flesh, the Redeemer, redemption, and gave us the certainty that indeed, evil does not have the last word in the world.

I would now like to mention, if briefly, another two events also initiated by Pope John Paul II: they are the [World Youth Day celebrated in Cologne](#) and the [Synod of Bishops on the Eucharist](#), which also ended the Year of the Eucharist inaugurated by Pope John Paul II.

The [World Youth Day](#) has lived on as a great gift in the memory of those present. More than a million young people gathered in the City of Cologne on the Rhine River and in the neighbouring towns to listen together to the Word of God, to pray together, to receive the Sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist, to sing and to celebrate together, to rejoice in life and to worship and receive the Lord in the Eucharist during the great meetings on Saturday evening and Sunday. Joy simply reigned throughout those days.

Apart from keeping order, the police had nothing to do - the Lord had gathered his family, tangibly overcoming every frontier and barrier, and in the great communion between us, he made us experience his presence.

The motto chosen for those days - "We have come to worship him!", contained two great images which encouraged the right approach from the outset. First there was the image of the pilgrimage, the image of the person who, looking beyond his own affairs and daily life, sets out in search of his essential destination, the truth, the right life, God.

This image of the person on his way towards the goal of life contained another two clear indications.

First of all, there was the invitation not to see the world that surrounds us solely as raw material with which we can do something, but to try to discover in it "the Creator's handwriting", the creative reason and the love from which the world was born and of which the universe speaks to us, if we pay attention, if our inner senses awaken and acquire perception of the deepest dimensions of reality.

As a second element there is a further invitation: to listen to the historical revelation which alone can offer us the key to the interpretation of the silent mystery of creation, pointing out to us the practical way towards the true Lord of the world and of history, who conceals himself in the poverty of the stable in Bethlehem.

The other image contained in the [World Youth Day](#) motto was the person worshipping: "We have come to worship him". Before any activity, before the world can change there must be worship. Worship alone sets us truly free; worship alone gives us the criteria for our action. Precisely in a world in which guiding criteria are absent and the threat exists that each person will be a law unto himself, it is fundamentally necessary to stress worship.

For all those who were present the intense silence of that million young people remains unforgettable, a silence that united and uplifted us all when the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament was placed on the altar. Let us cherish in our hearts the images of Cologne: they are signs that continue to be valid. Without mentioning individual names, I would like on this occasion to thank everyone who made World Youth Day possible; but especially, let us together thank the Lord, for indeed, he alone could give us those days in the way in which we lived them.

The word "adoration" [worship] brings us to the second great event that I wish to talk about: the Synod of Bishops and the Year of the Eucharist. Pope John Paul II, with the Encyclical [Ecclesia de Eucharistia](#) and the Apostolic Letter [Mane Nobiscum Domine](#), gave us the essential clues and at the same time, with his personal experience of Eucharistic faith, put the Church's teaching into practice.

Moreover, the Congregation for Divine Worship, in close connection with the Encyclical, published the Instruction [Redemptionis Sacramentum](#) as a practical guide to the correct implementation of the [conciliar Constitution on the liturgy and liturgical reform](#). In addition to all this, was it really possible to say anything new, to develop further the whole of this teaching?

This was exactly the great experience of the Synod, during which a reflection of the riches of the Eucharistic life of the Church today and the inexhaustibility of her Eucharistic faith could be perceived in the Fathers' contributions. What the Fathers thought and expressed must be presented, in close connection with the *Propositiones* of the Synod, in a Post-Synodal Document.

Here, once again, I only wish to underline that point which a little while ago we already mentioned in the context of World Youth Day: adoration of the Risen Lord, present in the Eucharist with flesh and blood, with body and soul, with divinity and humanity.

It is moving for me to see how everywhere in the Church the joy of Eucharistic adoration is reawakening and being fruitful. In the period of liturgical reform, Mass and adoration outside it were often seen as in opposition to one another: it was thought that the Eucharistic Bread had not been given to us to be contemplated, but to be eaten, as a widespread objection claimed at that time.

The experience of the prayer of the Church has already shown how nonsensical this antithesis was. Augustine had formerly said: "...*nemo autem illam carnem manducat, nisi prius adoraverit;... peccemus non adorando* - No one should eat this flesh without first adoring it;... we should sin were we not to adore it" (cf. *Enarr. in Ps 98: 9 CCL XXXIX 1385*).

Indeed, we do not merely receive something in the Eucharist. It is the encounter and unification of persons; the person, however, who comes to meet us and desires to unite himself to us is the Son of God. Such unification can only be brought about by means of adoration.

Receiving the Eucharist means adoring the One whom we receive. Precisely in this way and only in this way do we become one with him. Therefore, the development of Eucharistic adoration, as it took shape during the Middle Ages, was the most consistent consequence of the Eucharistic mystery itself: only in adoration can profound and true acceptance develop. And it is precisely this personal act of encounter with the Lord that develops the social mission which is contained in the Eucharist and desires to break down barriers, not only the barriers between the Lord and us but also and above all those that separate us from one another.

The last event of this year on which I wish to reflect here is the celebration of the conclusion of the [Second Vatican Council](#) 40 years ago. This memory prompts the question: What has been the result of the Council? Was it well received? What, in the acceptance of the Council, was good and what was inadequate or mistaken? What still remains to be done? No one can deny that in vast areas of the Church the implementation of the Council has been somewhat difficult, even without wishing to apply to what occurred in these years the description that St Basil, the great Doctor of the Church, made of the Church's situation after the Council of Nicea: he compares her situation to a naval battle in the darkness of the storm, saying among other things: "The raucous shouting of those who through disagreement rise up against one another, the incomprehensible chatter, the

confused din of uninterrupted clamouring, has now filled almost the whole of the Church, falsifying through excess or failure the right doctrine of the faith..." (*De Spiritu Sancto*, XXX, 77; PG 32, 213 A; SCh 17 ff., p. 524).

We do not want to apply precisely this dramatic description to the situation of the post-conciliar period, yet something from all that occurred is nevertheless reflected in it. The question arises: Why has the implementation of the Council, in large parts of the Church, thus far been so difficult?

Well, it all depends on the correct interpretation of the Council or - as we would say today - on its proper hermeneutics, the correct key to its interpretation and application. The problems in its implementation arose from the fact that two contrary hermeneutics came face to face and quarrelled with each other. One caused confusion, the other, silently but more and more visibly, bore and is bearing fruit.

On the one hand, there is an interpretation that I would call "a hermeneutic of discontinuity and rupture"; it has frequently availed itself of the sympathies of the mass media, and also one trend of modern theology. On the other, there is the "hermeneutic of reform", of renewal in the continuity of the one subject-Church which the Lord has given to us. She is a subject which increases in time and develops, yet always remaining the same, the one subject of the journeying People of God.

The hermeneutic of discontinuity risks ending in a split between the pre-conciliar Church and the post-conciliar Church. It asserts that the texts of the Council as such do not yet express the true spirit of the Council. It claims that they are the result of compromises in which, to reach unanimity, it was found necessary to keep and reconfirm many old things that are now pointless. However, the true spirit of the Council is not to be found in these compromises but instead in the impulses toward the new that are contained in the texts.

These innovations alone were supposed to represent the true spirit of the Council, and starting from and in conformity with them, it would be possible to move ahead. Precisely because the texts would only imperfectly reflect the true spirit of the Council and its newness, it would be necessary to go courageously beyond the texts and make room for the newness in which the Council's deepest intention would be expressed, even if it were still vague.

In a word: it would be necessary not to follow the texts of the Council but its spirit. In this way, obviously, a vast margin was left open for the question on how this spirit should subsequently be defined and room was consequently made for every whim.

The nature of a Council as such is therefore basically misunderstood. In this way, it is considered as a sort of constituent that eliminates an old constitution and creates a new one. However, the Constituent Assembly needs a mandator and then confirmation by the mandator, in other words, the people the constitution must serve. The Fathers had no such mandate and no one had ever

given them one; nor could anyone have given them one because the essential constitution of the Church comes from the Lord and was given to us so that we might attain eternal life and, starting from this perspective, be able to illuminate life in time and time itself.

Through the Sacrament they have received, Bishops are stewards of the Lord's gift. They are "stewards of the mysteries of God" (I Cor 4: 1); as such, they must be found to be "faithful" and "wise" (cf. Lk 12: 41-48). This requires them to administer the Lord's gift in the right way, so that it is not left concealed in some hiding place but bears fruit, and the Lord may end by saying to the administrator: "Since you were dependable in a small matter I will put you in charge of larger affairs" (cf. Mt 25: 14-30; Lk 19: 11-27).

These Gospel parables express the dynamic of fidelity required in the Lord's service; and through them it becomes clear that, as in a Council, the dynamic and fidelity must converge.

The hermeneutic of discontinuity is countered by the hermeneutic of reform, as it was presented first by Pope John XXIII in his Speech inaugurating the Council on 11 October 1962 and later by Pope Paul VI in his [Discourse for the Council's conclusion on 7 December 1965](#).

Here I shall cite only John XXIII's well-known words, which unequivocally express this hermeneutic when he says that the Council wishes "to transmit the doctrine, pure and integral, without any attenuation or distortion". And he continues: "Our duty is not only to guard this precious treasure, as if we were concerned only with antiquity, but to dedicate ourselves with an earnest will and without fear to that work which our era demands of us...". It is necessary that "adherence to all the teaching of the Church in its entirety and preciseness..." be presented in "faithful and perfect conformity to the authentic doctrine, which, however, should be studied and expounded through the methods of research and through the literary forms of modern thought. The substance of the ancient doctrine of the deposit of faith is one thing, and the way in which it is presented is another...", retaining the same meaning and message (*The Documents of Vatican II*, Walter M. Abbott, S.J., p. 715).

It is clear that this commitment to expressing a specific truth in a new way demands new thinking on this truth and a new and vital relationship with it; it is also clear that new words can only develop if they come from an informed understanding of the truth expressed, and on the other hand, that a reflection on faith also requires that this faith be lived. In this regard, the programme that Pope John XXIII proposed was extremely demanding, indeed, just as the synthesis of fidelity and dynamic is demanding.

However, wherever this interpretation guided the implementation of the Council, new life developed and new fruit ripened. Forty years after the Council, we can show that the positive is far greater and livelier than it appeared to be in the turbulent years around 1968. Today, we see that although the good seed developed slowly, it is nonetheless growing; and our deep gratitude for the

work done by the Council is likewise growing.

In his Discourse closing the Council, Paul VI pointed out a further specific reason why a hermeneutic of discontinuity can seem convincing.

In the great dispute about man which marks the modern epoch, the Council had to focus in particular on the theme of anthropology. It had to question the relationship between the Church and her faith on the one hand, and man and the contemporary world on the other (cf. *ibid.*). The question becomes even clearer if, instead of the generic term "contemporary world", we opt for another that is more precise: the Council had to determine in a new way the relationship between the Church and the modern era.

This relationship had a somewhat stormy beginning with the Galileo case. It was then totally interrupted when Kant described "religion within pure reason" and when, in the radical phase of the French Revolution, an image of the State and the human being that practically no longer wanted to allow the Church any room was disseminated.

In the 19th century under Pius IX, the clash between the Church's faith and a radical liberalism and the natural sciences, which also claimed to embrace with their knowledge the whole of reality to its limit, stubbornly proposing to make the "hypothesis of God" superfluous, had elicited from the Church a bitter and radical condemnation of this spirit of the modern age. Thus, it seemed that there was no longer any milieu open to a positive and fruitful understanding, and the rejection by those who felt they were the representatives of the modern era was also drastic.

In the meantime, however, the modern age had also experienced developments. People came to realize that the American Revolution was offering a model of a modern State that differed from the theoretical model with radical tendencies that had emerged during the second phase of the French Revolution.

The natural sciences were beginning to reflect more and more clearly their own limitations imposed by their own method, which, despite achieving great things, was nevertheless unable to grasp the global nature of reality.

So it was that both parties were gradually beginning to open up to each other. In the period between the two World Wars and especially after the Second World War, Catholic statesmen demonstrated that a modern secular State could exist that was not neutral regarding values but alive, drawing from the great ethical sources opened by Christianity.

Catholic social doctrine, as it gradually developed, became an important model between radical liberalism and the Marxist theory of the State. The natural sciences, which without reservation professed a method of their own to which God was barred access, realized ever more clearly that

this method did not include the whole of reality. Hence, they once again opened their doors to God, knowing that reality is greater than the naturalistic method and all that it can encompass.

It might be said that three circles of questions had formed which then, at the time of the Second Vatican Council, were expecting an answer. First of all, the relationship between faith and modern science had to be redefined. Furthermore, this did not only concern the natural sciences but also historical science for, in a certain school, the historical-critical method claimed to have the last word on the interpretation of the Bible and, demanding total exclusivity for its interpretation of Sacred Scripture, was opposed to important points in the interpretation elaborated by the faith of the Church.

Secondly, it was necessary to give a new definition to the relationship between the Church and the modern State that would make room impartially for citizens of various religions and ideologies, merely assuming responsibility for an orderly and tolerant coexistence among them and for the freedom to practise their own religion.

Thirdly, linked more generally to this was the problem of religious tolerance - a question that required a new definition of the relationship between the Christian faith and the world religions. In particular, before the recent crimes of the Nazi regime and, in general, with a retrospective look at a long and difficult history, it was necessary to evaluate and define in a new way the relationship between the Church and the faith of Israel.

These are all subjects of great importance - they were the great themes of the second part of the Council - on which it is impossible to reflect more broadly in this context. It is clear that in all these sectors, which all together form a single problem, some kind of discontinuity might emerge. Indeed, a discontinuity had been revealed but in which, after the various distinctions between concrete historical situations and their requirements had been made, the continuity of principles proved not to have been abandoned. It is easy to miss this fact at a first glance.

It is precisely in this combination of continuity and discontinuity at different levels that the very nature of true reform consists. In this process of innovation in continuity we must learn to understand more practically than before that the Church's decisions on contingent matters - for example, certain practical forms of liberalism or a free interpretation of the Bible - should necessarily be contingent themselves, precisely because they refer to a specific reality that is changeable in itself. It was necessary to learn to recognize that in these decisions it is only the principles that express the permanent aspect, since they remain as an undercurrent, motivating decisions from within.

On the other hand, not so permanent are the practical forms that depend on the historical situation and are therefore subject to change.

Basic decisions, therefore, continue to be well-grounded, whereas the way they are applied to new

contexts can change. Thus, for example, if religious freedom were to be considered an expression of the human inability to discover the truth and thus become a canonization of relativism, then this social and historical necessity is raised inappropriately to the metaphysical level and thus stripped of its true meaning. Consequently, it cannot be accepted by those who believe that the human person is capable of knowing the truth about God and, on the basis of the inner dignity of the truth, is bound to this knowledge.

It is quite different, on the other hand, to perceive religious freedom as a need that derives from human coexistence, or indeed, as an intrinsic consequence of the truth that cannot be externally imposed but that the person must adopt only through the process of conviction.

The Second Vatican Council, recognizing and making its own an essential principle of the modern State with the Decree on Religious Freedom, has recovered the deepest patrimony of the Church. By so doing she can be conscious of being in full harmony with the teaching of Jesus himself (cf. Mt 22: 21), as well as with the Church of the martyrs of all time. The ancient Church naturally prayed for the emperors and political leaders out of duty (cf. I Tm 2: 2); but while she prayed for the emperors, she refused to worship them and thereby clearly rejected the religion of the State.

The martyrs of the early Church died for their faith in that God who was revealed in Jesus Christ, and for this very reason they also died for freedom of conscience and the freedom to profess one's own faith - a profession that no State can impose but which, instead, can only be claimed with God's grace in freedom of conscience. A missionary Church known for proclaiming her message to all peoples must necessarily work for the freedom of the faith. She desires to transmit the gift of the truth that exists for one and all.

At the same time, she assures peoples and their Governments that she does not wish to destroy their identity and culture by doing so, but to give them, on the contrary, a response which, in their innermost depths, they are waiting for - a response with which the multiplicity of cultures is not lost but instead unity between men and women increases and thus also peace between peoples.

The Second Vatican Council, with its new definition of the relationship between the faith of the Church and certain essential elements of modern thought, has reviewed or even corrected certain historical decisions, but in this apparent discontinuity it has actually preserved and deepened her inmost nature and true identity.

The Church, both before and after the Council, was and is the same Church, one, holy, catholic and apostolic, journeying on through time; she continues "her pilgrimage amid the persecutions of the world and the consolations of God", proclaiming the death of the Lord until he comes (cf. Lumen Gentium, n. 8).

Those who expected that with this fundamental "yes" to the modern era all tensions would be

dispelled and that the "openness towards the world" accordingly achieved would transform everything into pure harmony, had underestimated the inner tensions as well as the contradictions inherent in the modern epoch.

They had underestimated the perilous frailty of human nature which has been a threat to human progress in all the periods of history and in every historical constellation. These dangers, with the new possibilities and new power of man over matter and over himself, did not disappear but instead acquired new dimensions: a look at the history of the present day shows this clearly.

In our time too, the Church remains a "sign that will be opposed" (Lk 2: 34) - not without reason did Pope John Paul II, then still a Cardinal, give this title to the theme for the Spiritual Exercises he preached in 1976 to Pope Paul VI and the Roman Curia. The Council could not have intended to abolish the Gospel's opposition to human dangers and errors.

On the contrary, it was certainly the Council's intention to overcome erroneous or superfluous contradictions in order to present to our world the requirement of the Gospel in its full greatness and purity.

The steps the Council took towards the modern era which had rather vaguely been presented as "openness to the world", belong in short to the perennial problem of the relationship between faith and reason that is re-emerging in ever new forms. The situation that the Council had to face can certainly be compared to events of previous epochs.

In his First Letter, St Peter urged Christians always to be ready to give an answer (*apo-logia*) to anyone who asked them for the *logos*, the reason for their faith (cf. 3: 15).

This meant that biblical faith had to be discussed and come into contact with Greek culture and learn to recognize through interpretation the separating line but also the convergence and the affinity between them in the one reason, given by God.

When, in the 13th century through the Jewish and Arab philosophers, Aristotelian thought came into contact with Medieval Christianity formed in the Platonic tradition and faith and reason risked entering an irreconcilable contradiction, it was above all St Thomas Aquinas who mediated the new encounter between faith and Aristotelian philosophy, thereby setting faith in a positive relationship with the form of reason prevalent in his time. There is no doubt that the wearing dispute between modern reason and the Christian faith, which had begun negatively with the Galileo case, went through many phases, but with the Second Vatican Council the time came when broad new thinking was required.

Its content was certainly only roughly traced in the conciliar texts, but this determined its essential direction, so that the dialogue between reason and faith, particularly important today, found its

bearings on the basis of the Second Vatican Council.

This dialogue must now be developed with great openmindedness but also with that clear discernment that the world rightly expects of us in this very moment. Thus, today we can look with gratitude at the Second Vatican Council: if we interpret and implement it guided by a right hermeneutic, it can be and can become increasingly powerful for the ever necessary renewal of the Church.

Lastly, should I perhaps recall once again that 19 April this year on which, to my great surprise, the College of Cardinals elected me as the Successor of Pope John Paul II, as a Successor of St Peter on the chair of the Bishop of Rome? Such an office was far beyond anything I could ever have imagined as my vocation. It was, therefore, only with a great act of trust in God that I was able to say in obedience my "yes" to this choice. Now as then, I also ask you all for your prayer, on whose power and support I rely.

At the same time, I would like to warmly thank all those who have welcomed me and still welcome me with great trust, goodness and understanding, accompanying me day after day with their prayers.

Christmas is now at hand. The Lord God did not counter the threats of history with external power, as we human beings would expect according to the prospects of our world. His weapon is goodness. He revealed himself as a child, born in a stable. This is precisely how he counters with his power, completely different from the destructive powers of violence. In this very way he saves us. In this very way he shows us what saves.

In these days of Christmas, let us go to meet him full of trust, like the shepherds, like the Wise Men of the East. Let us ask Mary to lead us to the Lord. Let us ask him himself to make his face shine upon us. Let us ask him also to defeat the violence in the world and to make us experience the power of his goodness. With these sentiments, I warmly impart to you all my Apostolic Blessing.

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