



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE FAITHFUL OF BOLZANO-BRESSANONE
WHO DONATED THE CHRISTMAS TREE FOR ST PETER'S SQUARE***

Clementine Hall

Friday, 17 December 2010

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Dear Friends,

With joy I welcome all of you who have donated your lovely Christmas tree that comes from Luson (Lüsen). I greet all of you from my heart, beginning with Bishop Karl Golser, who I thank for his warm words. With him, I also greet the priests, religious, parish councils and all the faithful of the towns, places and valleys of your beautiful land which is profoundly shaped by faith.

I greet the President of the Province, which includes South Tyrol, and the Mayor of the city of Bressanone. I thank them also for their splendid words which really give me the sensation of being at home in South Tyrol and of being enveloped in and accompanied by their friendship. I also offer a greeting to the representatives of the city of Bressanone and Luson, of the Schützen Circle of Bressanone and of the Isarco Valley (Eisacktal District).

I address a special “Grüß Gott” to the Mayor of Natz-Schabs, who will grant me honorary citizenship in memory of my beloved maternal grandmother who was born in Frazione Rasa (Fraktion Raas), an outlying district. I also address a cordial “Vergelt’s Gott” for this much appreciated sign of your affection! In my greeting, I would also like to include all the other representatives of public life, as well as the rest of you, who with your traditional costumes, evocative music and regional specialities, have come here to Rome to make known the traditions of your splendid land.

I know that this particular occasion has reawakened the interest of many and has included the entire population of the region. Above of all, as I have learned, the women of Bressanone have

worked hard preparing the straw stars which are typical Christmas decorations of the German-speaking region. I thank all of you for the special gift of this red fir tree, as well as all the other Christmas trees which will decorate the Apostolic Palace and the Vatican area, and have made me feel the presence of South Tyrol in my apartments. May this generous initiative urge all the people of South Tyrol to bear witness in their environment to the values of life, love and peace which Christmas recommends to us every year.

This year the fir tree in St Peter's Square comes from picturesque Luson, not far from Sass de Putia (Peitlerkofel), in the vast Dolomites. The extraordinary beauty of this landscape invites us to recognize the greatness of our Creator, whose love shines ceaselessly in his marvellous work of nature also to illuminate man's heart and to fill it with peace and joy.

This evening at the end of the official inauguration ceremony, with the presence of Cardinal Giovanni Lajolo, President of the Governorate, the lights, that decorated the tree will be lit. The fir tree, collected at an altitude of about 155 metres and cut without damaging the life of the forest, will stand beside the Nativity scene until the end of the Christmas holidays and will be admired by many pilgrims and tourists from every part of the world. It is an important symbol of the light which Christ, with his birth, gave to humanity. He, the Messiah, was made man and came to us to dispel the darkness of error and sin; "this 'condescension' of God is accomplished surpassingly" (Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini*, n. 11). Having faith in him means welcoming within ourselves the light that is Jesus Christ.

The Christmas tree enriches the symbolic value of the crib, which is a message of brotherhood and of friendship; an invitation to unity and peace; an invitation to make room in our lives and in society for God who offers us his omnipotent love through the frail figure of a baby, because he wants us to respond freely to his love with our love. The crib and the tree therefore bring a message of hope and love and help to create a climate conducive to living in the right spiritual and religious dimension, the mystery of the Redeemer's birth.

Dear friends,

I warmly wish all those present and those who live in your region a Christmas full of meditation and a care-free Christmas. I assure you all that I will pray for you and for all the people of your region in front of the Nativity scene and I impart to all of you an Apostolic Blessing.

I wish everyone a holy Christmas!

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