



The Holy See

LUNCHEON OFFERED BY THE HOLY FATHER
TO THE ROME'S NEEDIEST SERVED BY THE SHELTERS AND KITCHENS
OF THE MISSIONARIES OF CHARITY ON THE OCCASION
OF THE 100th ANNIVERSARY OF THE BIRTH
OF BLESSED MOTHER TERESA OF CALCUTTA

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

*Atrium of Paul VI Audience Hall
Sunday, 26 December 2010*

Dear Friends,

I am very glad to be with you today and I address a cordial welcome to the Rev. Mother General of the Missionaries of Charity, to the Priests, to the Sisters, to the Contemplative Brothers and to all of you present here to experience this fraternal moment together.

The light of the Lord's Birth fills our hearts with the joy and peace announced by the Angels to the shepherds of Bethlehem: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased!" (Lk 2:14). The Child whom we see in the grotto is God himself who became man, to show us how much he cares for us, how much he loves us: God became one of us to make himself close to each one, to overcome evil, to free us from sin, to give us hope, to tell us that we are never alone. We can always turn to him, without fear, calling him Father, certain that at every moment, in every situation of life, even the most difficult, he does not forget us.

We must say to ourselves more often: "Yes, God actually takes care of me, he loves me, Jesus was born for me too; I must always trust in him".

Dear brothers and sisters, let us permit the light of the Child Jesus, of the Son of God made man to illumine our lives to turn them into light, as we see in a special way in the lives of Saints. I am

thinking of the witness of Bl. Teresa of Calcutta, a reflection of the light of God's love. Celebrating the 100th anniversary of her birth is a cause of gratitude and reflection for a renewed and joyful commitment to the service of the Lord and of our brothers and sisters, especially the neediest. The Lord himself chose to be needy, as we know. Dear Sisters, dear Priests and Brothers, dear friends of the staff, charity is the force that changes the world, because God is love (*cf.* 1 Jn 4:7-9).

Bl. Teresa of Calcutta lived charity to all without distinction, but with a preference for the poorest and the most forsaken: a luminous sign of the God's fatherhood and goodness. She was able to recognize in each one the Face of Christ, whom she loved with her whole being: she continued to meet the Christ she worshipped and received in the Eucharist on the roads and streets of the city, becoming a living "image" of Jesus who pours on man's wounds the grace of merciful love.

The answer to those who ask why Mother Teresa became so famous is simple: because she lived in a humble and hidden way, for love and in the love of God. She herself said that her greatest reward was to love Jesus and to serve him in the poor. Her slight figure, her hands joined, or while she was caressing a sick person, a leper, someone dying, or a child, is the visible sign of a life transformed by God. In the night of human sorrow she made the light of divine Love shine out and helped so many hearts to rediscover that peace which God alone can give.

Let us thank the Lord, because in Bl. Teresa of Calcutta we have all seen how our life can change when it encounters Jesus; it can become a reflection of God's light for others. To so many men and women in wretched situations of suffering, she brought consolation and the certainty that God does not ever abandon anyone! Her mission continues here as in other parts of the world through all those, who live her charism as men and women Missionaries of Charity.

Our gratitude is great, dear Sisters, dear Brothers, for your humble and discreet presence, hidden from human eyes but extraordinary and precious to the heart of God. Your witness of life tells human beings, often in search of illusory happiness, where true joy is to be found: in sharing, in giving, in loving with the same freely-given generosity as God, who breaks the logic of human selfishness.

Dear friends! May you know that the Pope loves you, carries you in his heart, gathers you all in a fatherly embrace and prays for you. Very many good wishes! Thank you for having wanted to share the joy of these days of celebration. I invoke the motherly protection of the Holy Family of Nazareth which we are celebrating today — Jesus, Mary and Joseph — and I bless you all and your loved ones.

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