



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE BENEDICT XVI
TO THE DELEGATION FROM THE MUNICIPALITY
OF PESCOENNATARO (ISERNIA) IN GRATITUDE
FOR THE DONATION OF THE CHRISTMAS TREE
IN ST PETER'S SQUARE***

Clementine Hall

Friday, 14 December 2012

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I am glad to welcome you on the day which the Christmas tree — a fir which this year comes from Pescopennataro in the Province of Isernia, Molise — is being presented in St Peter's Square. I think the whole town has come here today! I address to each and every one my cordial greeting, starting with Mayor Pompilio Sciulli, whom I thank for the words he has just addressed to me on behalf of you all. I also greet the civil authorities, with a special thought for the President of the Region. I am pleased to greet with brotherly affection Bishop Domenico Scotti and the Parish Priest of Pescopennataro.

The Christmas tree lights that decorate the tree will be turned on this evening at the end of the ceremony for its official inauguration. The tree will stand next to the crib until the end of the Christmas festivities and will be admired by many pilgrims from every part of the world. I thank you for this devout tribute, as well as for the other smaller trees which decorate the Apostolic Palace and the rooms in the Vatican! Dear people of Pescopennataro and inhabitants of the entire Molise Region, the silver fir you have wished to give to me also expresses the faith and devotion of the Molisan people who have cherished through the centuries an important spiritual treasure, expressed in culture, art and the local traditions. Each one of you and your neighbours in the Region are duty bound to draw constantly from this patrimony and to build it up, in order to face the new social emergencies and the daily cultural challenges, in continuity with your consolidated and fertile faithfulness to Christianity.

I warmly hope that the Nativity of the Lord will be serene and rich for all of you here, for your fellow

citizens and for all the inhabitants of your Region. The Lord, according to the famous oracle of the Prophet Isaiah, appeared as a great light for the people who walked in darkness (cf. Is 9:1) God was made man and came to dwell among us to dispel the shadows of error and sin, bringing his divine light to humanity. Not only has the brilliance of this most exalted light — of which the Christmas tree is a symbol — that has not faded with the passing of the centuries and millennia, but continues to shine upon us. It illuminates every one of us who comes into the world, especially when we must go through difficult moments of uncertainty and hardship. Indeed Jesus was to say of himself: “I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (Jn 8:12).

When in the various eras an effort was made to extinguish God’s light in order to kindle deceptive and delusory gleams, a succession of seasons marked by tragic violence to men and women unfolded. This happened because the effort to delete God’s name from the pages of history results in drawing crooked lines in which even the most beautiful and noble words lose their true meaning.

Let us think of terms such as “freedom”, the “common good” and “justice”: uprooted from God and his love, from God who showed his face in Jesus Christ, all too often these realities remain at the mercy of human concerns, losing their connection with the requirements of truth and civil responsibility.

Dear friends, I thank you once again for your gesture. Your tree is the tree of the Year of Faith: may it please the Lord to reward you for your gift, strengthening faith in you and in your communities! I ask this through the intercession of the Virgin Mary, the One who for the first time welcomed and followed the Word of God made man, as I wholeheartedly impart the Apostolic Blessing to all of you and to your families.

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