



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

GENERAL AUDIENCE

Saint Peter's Square

Wednesday, 18 December 2013

Video

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning,

Our meeting is taking place in the spiritual climate of Advent, which is made all the more intense by the Holy Christmas Novena we are experiencing in these days that lead us to the celebration of Christmas. Therefore, today I would like to reflect with you on the Birth of Jesus, the feast of trust and of hope which overcomes uncertainty and pessimism. And the reason for our hope is this: God is with us and God still trusts us! Think well on this: God is with us and God still trusts us. God the Father is generous. He comes to abide with mankind, he chooses earth as his dwelling place to remain with people and to be found where man passes his days in joy or in sorrow. Therefore, earth is no longer only “a valley of tears”; rather, it is the place where God himself has pitched his tent, it is the meeting place of God with man, of God's solidarity with men.

God willed to share in our human condition to the point of becoming one with us in the Person of Jesus, who is true Man and true God. However, there is something even more surprising. The presence of God among men did not take place in a perfect, idyllic world but rather in this real world, which is marked by so many things both good and bad, by division, wickedness, poverty, arrogance and war. He chose to live in our history as it is, with all the weight of its limitations and of its tragedies. In doing so, he has demonstrated in an unequalled manner his merciful and truly loving disposition toward the human creature. He is God-with-us. Jesus is God-with-us. Do you believe this? Together let us profess: Jesus is God with us! Jesus is God with us always and for ever with us in history's suffering and sorrow. The Birth of Jesus reveals that God “sided” with man once and for all, to save us, to raise us from the dust of our misery, from our difficulty, from our sins.

Hence the great “gift” of the Child of Bethlehem: He brings us a spiritual energy, an energy which helps us not to despair in our struggle, in our hopelessness, in our sadness, for it is an energy that warms and transforms the heart. Indeed, the Birth of Jesus brings us the good news that we are loved immensely and uniquely by God, and he not only enables us to know this love, he also gives it to us, he communicates it to us!

We may derive two considerations from the joyous contemplation of the mystery of the Son of God born for us.

The first is that if God, in the Christmas mystery, reveals himself not as One who remains on high and dominates the universe, but as the One who bends down, descends to the little and poor earth, it means that, to be like him, we should not put ourselves above others, but indeed lower ourselves, place ourselves at the service of others, become small with the small and poor with the poor. It is regrettable to see a Christian who does not want to lower himself, who does not want to serve. A Christian who struts about is ugly: this is not Christian, it is pagan. The Christian serves, he lowers himself. Let us be sure that our brothers and sisters do not ever feel alone!

The second consequence: if God, through Jesus, involved himself with man to the point of becoming one of us, it means that whatever we have done to a brother or a sister we have done to him. Jesus himself reminded us of this: whoever has fed, welcomed, visited, loved one of the least and poorest of men, will have done it to the Son of God.

Let us entrust ourselves to the maternal intercession of Mary, the Mother of Jesus and our Mother, that she may help us this holy Christmastide, which is already close at hand, to see in the face of our neighbour, especially the weakest and most marginalized people, the image of the Son of God made man.

To special groups

I greet all the English-speaking pilgrims present at today’s Audience including those from England, Australia and the United States. I thank the members of “Up with People” for their musical entertainment. Upon you and your families I invoke God’s blessings of joy and peace!

I cordially greet Poles: those present here, as well as your fellow countrymen in Poland and abroad. In a few days time our hearts will be filled with the joy of the Lord’s Birth. By leaving a place at the dinner table on Christmas Eve, let us remember the poor, the hungry, people who are alone, the homeless, the marginalized, the war weary, and especially children! Jesus, the Son of God made Man is present in all of them. Let us open our hearts in order that they may share in our joy. Praised be Jesus Christ.

I address a special greeting to *young people*, to *the sick* and to *newlyweds*. Dear *young people*,

especially the various Scout groups, draw near to the mystery of Bethlehem with the same sentiments of faith and humility that Mary had. You, dear *sick*, draw from the Crib the joy and intimate peace that Jesus comes to bring the world. And you, dear *newlyweds*, contemplate the example of the Holy Family of Nazareth by imitating their virtues.