



# The Holy See

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JOHN PAUL II

## **ANGELUS**

*Third Sunday of Advent, 14 December 2003*

1. *"Rejoice in the Lord always.... The Lord is near"* (Phil 4: 4-5).

With these words of the Apostle Paul the liturgy invites us to be joyful. It is the Third Sunday of Advent and is known as *"Gaudete"* Sunday for this very reason. These are the words the Servant of God Pope Paul VI chose for his memorable Apostolic Exhortation on Christian joy: *"Gaudete in Domino!"*.

2. *Advent is a season of rejoicing because it revives the expectation of the most joyful event in history: the birth of the Son of God by the Virgin Mary.*

To know that God is not distant but close, not indifferent but compassionate, not aloof but a merciful Father who follows us lovingly with respect for our freedom: all this is a cause of deep joy which the alternating ups and downs of daily life cannot touch.

3. An unmistakable feature of Christian joy is that it *can go hand in hand with suffering*, since it is based entirely on love. Indeed, the Lord who "is near", to the point of becoming man, comes to fill us with his joy, *the joy of loving*. Only in this way can we understand the serene joy of the martyrs even amid trial, or the smile of saints, full of charity for those who are suffering: a smile that does not offend but consoles.

*"Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you!"* (Lk 1: 28). The Angel's announcement to Mary is an invitation to rejoice. Let us ask the Holy Virgin for the gift of Christian joy.

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*After leading the recitation of the Angelus, the Pope had a special word for the children of Rome who had come for the blessing of the Baby Jesus figurines for their home Nativity scenes. He also greeted pilgrims from Spain.*

I greet with affection the children of Rome who have come for the traditional blessing of the "Baby Jesus"; and I thank the Roman Centre of After-School Activities which has organized this lovely event. Dear children and boys and girls, when you place the statue of the Baby Jesus in your Nativity scene, say a prayer for me and for all the people who turn to the Pope in their difficulties. Happy Christmas to you all!

I warmly greet the Spanish-speaking pilgrims, especially the faithful from the parishes of San Pablo and Santa María y los Dolores in Murcia, and of La Merced in Madrid. May Advent prepare your hearts for the encounter with Christ! Many thanks.

I wish you all a good Sunday!

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