



# The Holy See

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JOHN PAUL II

**GENERAL AUDIENCE**

*Wednesday, 8 September 2004*

## ***Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary***

### ***Mary as "blessed among women"***

1. The liturgy today commemorates the *Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary*. This feast, very important to popular piety, leads us to admire in Mary the Child, the *purest dawn of the Redemption*. We are contemplating a little girl like every other, yet at the same time the only one who was "blessed among women" (Lk 1: 42). Mary was the immaculate "Daughter of Zion", destined to become the Mother of the Messiah.

2. Looking at the Child Mary, how can we fail to remember the many *defenceless children of Beslan, in Ossezia*, victims of a barbaric kidnapping and tragic massacre? They were *inside a school*, a place in which values are learned that give meaning to the history, culture and civilization of peoples: reciprocal respect, solidarity, justice and peace. Instead, between those walls they experienced outrage, hatred and death, the evil consequences of cruel fanaticism and an insane disregard for the human person.

At this moment our gaze broadens to take in *all innocent children* in every corner of the earth who are victims of the violence of adults. Children *forced to use weapons* and taught to hate and kill; children *induced to beg in the streets*, exploited for easy earnings; children *ill-treated and humiliated* by arrogant, abusive grown-ups; children *left to themselves*, deprived of the warmth of a family and prospects of a future; children who *die of hunger*, children *killed* in the many wars in various regions of the world.

3. It is a loud *cry of pain from children whose dignity is offended*. It cannot, it must not leave

anyone indifferent. Dear brothers and sisters, before the cradle of the Infant Mary, let us respond with renewed awareness to the duty that behoves us all to *protect and defend* these frail creatures and *to build them a future of peace*. Let us pray together that the conditions for a serene and safe life may be created for them.

## PRAYER OF THE HOLY FATHER FOR ALL THE INNOCENT CHILDREN IN THE WORLD

Brothers and Sisters, accepting the Holy Father's invitation, let us raise our prayer to God.

Let us say together: *Lord, hear us!*

1. For the children of Beslan who were torn from life with brutal violence while they were preparing to start the new school year, and for their parents and friends killed with them: that God in his mercy will throw open the doors of his house to them, let us pray:

Resp.: *Lord, hear us!*

2. For the injured, for the victims' families and for all the members of the Beslan community who are mourning with broken hearts the death of their loved ones: that, supported by the light of faith and comforted by the solidarity of so many persons throughout the world, they may be able to forgive those who have harmed them, let us pray:

Resp.: *Lord, hear us!*

3. For all the children in so many parts of the world who are suffering and dying because of the violence and abuse of adults: that the Lord will enable them to feel the comfort of his love and melt the hardness of hearts that is the cause of their suffering, let us pray:

Resp.: *Lord, hear us!*

4. For the many people abducted in the tormented Land of Iraq, and in particular, for the two young Italian volunteer workers kidnapped yesterday in Baghdad: that they may all be treated with respect and quickly restored unharmed to the affection of their loved ones, let us pray:

Resp.: *Lord, hear us!*

5. For justice and peace in the world, that the Lord may illumine the minds of those who are subjected to the fatal suggestion of violence and open all hearts to dialogue and reconciliation, so as to build a future of hope and peace, let us pray:

Resp.: *Lord, hear us!*

*The Holy Father:*

God, our Father, you created men and women so that they might live together in communion. Make us understand that every child is a treasure of humanity and that violence to others is a dead end with no future. We ask you this through the intercession of the Virgin Mother of Jesus Christ Our Lord, who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

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*To Polish-speaking pilgrims*

Today is the Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. As we glorify the Immaculate Mother of the Son of God depicted as a Child, we cannot but recall the recent victims of terrorism at Ossezia and all children in different corners of the world who are suffering because of the violence of adults. Let us not cease to pray that every child may be welcomed with respect and love. According to this intention, let us pray for peace in the world.

*To English-speaking pilgrims*

Dear brothers and sisters, I offer a warm welcome to all the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors present at today's Audience. I greet particularly the groups from England, Ireland, Denmark, Japan, Canada, Singapore and the United States of America. I wish you a pleasant stay in Rome and I cordially invoke upon all of you joy and peace in our Lord Jesus Christ.

*To youth, the sick and newly-weds*

I greet you, dear *young people*, dear *sick people* and dear *newly-weds*. May the heavenly Mother of God whom today we commemorate as a Child always sustain you on the path of a more perfect attachment to Christ and his Gospel.

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