



The Holy See

ADVENT MASS FOR THE STUDENTS OF THE ROMAN STATE UNIVERSITIES

HOMILY OF JOHN PAUL II *Thursday, 11 December 2003* 1. "Fear not, I will help you" (Is 41: 13). God's promise, echoed by the Prophet, was entirely fulfilled in the *birth of Jesus in Bethlehem*. In him, God became one of us! For this reason, we need not fear; the season we are living of Advent *encourages us to hope*. Dear Brothers and Sisters, today's gathering is situated in this setting of confident expectation of Christ's coming. I greet you all with affection. I greet first of all the distinguished rectors, lecturers and students of the Roman Universities. I extend a special thought to Letizia Moratti, Minister for Education and for University and Research. I greet the University chaplains and the national delegations of the university apostolate. I thank the President of the Conference of Rectors of the Italian Universities, and the student representatives who expressed the sentiments of all. 2. "I will make... the dry land into springs of water" (Is 41: 18). This is God's great promise to the destitute and poor who, as the Prophet affirms, "seek water...", because "their tongue is parched with thirst" (Is 41: 17). Their thirst refers to the ardent desire for truth, justice and peace present in the soul of every man and woman. In reality, the human being's most intimate aspirations find their complete answer in God alone. For this reason I encourage you, dear students, to make your time of formation an unremitting quest for God. Do not be deterred by doubts and difficulties. God, the Prophet assures, holds you by the "right hand" (Is 41: 13), he is next to you. His consoling presence will make you more aware of the mission that you are called to carry out in the university setting. 3. In these days, many of you have taken part in the meeting that focused on the process of European integration. You who are part of the university world must also make your contribution to this process. Social, political and economic structures certainly hold major importance for the unity of Europe, but the humanistic and spiritual aspects cannot possibly be neglected. It is essential that modern Europe safeguard its scale of values and recognize above all that Christianity was the force able to promote, counsel and consolidate them. 4. Christmas is the privileged occasion to highlight one of the most influential Christian values: with the birth of Jesus, in the simplicity and poverty of Bethlehem, God gave back dignity to every human being's existence. He offered to all people the possibility to participate in his same divine life. May this immeasurable gift always find hearts ready to receive it! I entrust this wish of mine to the maternal intercession of Mary. May she protect each one of you, your families and the academic communities to which you belong. Happy Advent and a Happy Christmas! © Copyright 2003 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana