



The Holy See

TE DEUM AND FIRST VESPERS OF THE SOLEMNITY OF MARY, MOTHER OF GOD

HOMILY OF JOHN PAUL II *Wednesday 31 December 2003* 1. *Te Deum laudamus!* Thus does the Church sing her gratitude to God, while she is still rejoicing at the Lord's Birth. At this evocative evening celebration our attention is attracted by the *ideal convergence of the solar year with the liturgical year*, two temporal cycles that underlie two dimensions of time. *In the first dimension*, the days, months and years succeed one another in a cosmic rhythm in which the human mind recognizes the imprint of the divine creative Wisdom. This is why the Church exclaims: *Te Deum laudamus!* 2. *The other dimension of time* that this evening's celebration recalls is that of the history of salvation. At its centre and summit is the mystery of Christ. The Apostle Paul has just reminded us of it: "*When the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son*" (Gal 4: 4). Christ is the centre of history and of the cosmos; he is the new Sun that dawned upon the world from "*on high*" (Lk 1: 78), a Sun that directs all things to the ultimate goal of history. In these days between Christmas and New Year's Day, these *two dimensions of time* intersect with special eloquence. It is as though the eternity of God had come to visit human time. The Eternal thus becomes a present "instant" so that the cyclical repetition of days and years does not end in a senseless void. 3. *Te Deum laudamus!* Yes, we praise you, Father, Lord of Heaven and earth. We thank you, for *you sent your Son* as a tiny Child to give fullness to time according to your gracious will (cf. Mt 11: 25-26). In him, your Only-Begotten Son, you gave humanity access to eternal salvation. We raise our solemn thanksgiving to you for *the countless benefits* you have bestowed upon us during the year. We praise you and thank you with Mary, "*who gave to the world the author of life*" (*Antif. lit.*). 4. *Dear faithful of the Diocese of Rome*, it is right that my words should now be more specifically addressed to you! You are here together with the Pope to offer praise and thanksgiving to God, Giver of all good things. My cordial greeting goes to each one of you, and especially to the Cardinal Vicar, to Mons. Vicegerent, to the Auxiliary Bishops and to all who work actively at the service of the diocesan community. I greet the Italian Authorities and the Mayor of Rome, whom I thank for his appreciated presence. We have with us here this evening the *icon of Our Lady of Divine Love*, a precious gift to the Pope from the community of Rome. I am deeply grateful to you for it. *Twenty gems* are set into the crown of the Virgin, which correspond to the 20 Mysteries of the [Holy Rosary](#), after I asked that the five Mysteries of Light be added to the 15 traditional Mysteries. I would like this icon to be venerated in the new Shrine of Our Lady of Divine Love. In particular, I entrust to the Virgin the pastoral commitment that in recent years the Diocese has devoted to the *family, youth* and *vocations of special consecration*. I repeat to you all what I wrote in 1981 in the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation [Familiaris Consortio](#): "*The future of humanity passes by way of the family!*" (n. 86). To the Mother of God and to her spouse, St Joseph, I entrust my prayer to Jesus, so that it may inspire pastoral approaches in the Diocese of Rome that are fitting for our times, addressed to all the families of the City and to the young couples who are preparing for marriage.

May the family correspond ever more fully to the project that God has always had for it!5. Dear Brothers and Sisters, another year is rapidly drawing to a close. We are already looking to 2004, which is silhouetted on the horizon. Let us *invoke* on the year that is ending and on the one that will begin in a few hours *the motherly protection of Mary Most Holy*, asking her to continue to guide us on our way. Virgin Mary, Queen of Peace, obtain days of peace for the city of Rome, for Italy, for Europe and for the whole world. *Sancta Dei Genitrix, ora pro nobis!* Mother of the Redeemer, Our Lady of Divine Love, pray for us. Amen! © Copyright 2003 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana

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