



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II TO THE CENTRAL SECURITY FORCE OF VATICAN CITY STATE

Monday, 18 December 1978

Beloved Sons,

I am happy to be here with you today for a short meeting, but all the more cordial and joyful, in order to greet you with particular warmth of sentiment. Two motives urge me to address you.

The first consists in the particular service which you carry out with indefatigable solicitude within this Vatican City. I know how demanding it is and what a sense of responsibility it requires of each of you. Well, I am here to thank you for your work, for the care and effort with which you accomplish the task entrusted to you. Your commitment of surveillance in order that everything may take place in safety and order can become an opportunity and source for your personal discipline and therefore for a human and spiritual self-education. In this sense, it is perhaps not inopportune to recall that the Gospel calls on all Christians to a constant attitude of fruitful "vigilance" with regard to the coming of the Lord.

The fact of carrying out your activity near St Peter's Tomb, the centre of the Catholic World, is certainly a great honour and must be for you also a motive of deep joy but also of salutary reflections. It must be a stimulus to live Christian life fully. Yours is not just any job or service; yours is a commitment which calls for faith and consistency, so that you, too, in daily life, may bear witness to your religious convictions and your love for Christ, the Church and the Pope.

My visit and my greeting today are inspired also by a second motive. Christmas is now near. We must all wait for the Lord and be ready to receive him in the right way: with faith, commitment and joy. When he was born in Bethlehem, the first to welcome him and pay him homage were shepherds keeping watch; Luke writes as follows: "There were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night" (Lk 2:8). This is the right attitude, necessary for everyone. You, too,

therefore are called to be like those keepers of flocks, or like those wise virgins, who at the arrival of the bridegroom were prepared to go and meet him (cf. Mt 25:6-10). On this condition, Christmas really becomes a "feast" in the full sense of the term, with consequent effects on everyday life. Those shepherds, in fact, after the visit to Jesus, "returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen" (Lk 2:20).

At this point, my word changes into a wish, sincerely felt, for you and your families. May this coming Christmas be a real occasion of love, peace and intimacy in your homes. Only these realities make possible a real and lasting human and Christian prosperity, which I willingly invoke on you. And may the Lord protect you, reward you and encourage you with the abundance of his graces, of which my special Apostolic Blessing is intended as a token.

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