



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II TO THE YOUTH OF ITALIAN CATHOLIC ACTION

*Hall of Popes
Saturday, 21 December 1996*

I kindly thank you, dear boys and girls of Catholic Action, who have come from various parts of Italy for this appointment — by now customary — that enables us to exchange greetings for a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

I welcome you with joy: from the children, to the boys and girls, to the adolescents. I greet you with affection, together with your leaders and your teachers, beginning with the National President and the General Chaplain. Thank you for the expressions of affection you addressed to me.

In last year's Christmas meeting, the message I gave the boys and girls of Catholic Action was "Let us give children a future of peace". I am certain that you received it with great seriousness. I know that I can count on the young people of Catholic Action.

This year, thinking of the next [World Day of Peace](#), I entrust you with the task of living and spreading *forgiveness*, thus becoming peacemakers. Looking at the crib, where the little Child lies in the straw of the manger, we can easily understand what forgiveness is: it is reaching out to the other who offended me, coming close to him who drew away from me. God was faithful to sinful humanity to the point of dwelling among us.

The beautiful Christmas carol *Tu scendi dalle stelle* says: "Oh, how much it cost you to have loved me!". The Son of God loved us, who offended him; we too must love those who offend us, and thus conquer evil with good. To hate sin but to love the sinner: this is the way to peace, the way that the Lord teaches us from the mystery of his birth.

When I look at you, boys and girls, I see as it were Jesus' peers. To these young contemporaries of Jesus I wish to offer a Blessing and a cordial wish for a Merry Christmas!

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