



The Holy See

URBI ET ORBI MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE BENEDICT XVI

CHRISTMAS 2012

“Veritas de terra orta est!” – “Truth has sprung out of the earth” (*Ps 85:12*).

Dear brothers and sisters in Rome and throughout the world, a happy Christmas to you and your families!

In this *Year of Faith*, I express my Christmas greetings and good wishes in these words taken from one of the Psalms: “Truth has sprung out of the earth”. Actually, in the text of the Psalm, these words are in the future: “Kindness and truth shall meet; / justice and peace shall kiss. / Truth shall spring out of the earth, / and justice shall look down from heaven. / The Lord himself will give his benefits; / our land shall yield its increase. / Justice shall walk before him, / and salvation, along the way of his steps” (*Ps 85:11-14*).

Today these prophetic words have been fulfilled! In Jesus, born in Bethlehem of the Virgin Mary, kindness and truth do indeed meet; justice and peace have kissed; truth has sprung out of the earth and justice has looked down from heaven. Saint Augustine explains with admirable brevity: “What is truth? The Son of God. What is the earth? The flesh. Ask whence Christ has been born, and you will see that truth has sprung out of the earth ... truth has been born of the Virgin Mary” (*En. in Ps. 84:13*). And in a Christmas sermon he says that “in this yearly feast we celebrate that day when the prophecy was fulfilled: ‘truth shall spring out of the earth, and justice shall look down from heaven’. The Truth, which is in the bosom of the Father has sprung out of the earth, to be in the womb of a mother too. The Truth which rules the whole world has sprung out of the earth, to be held in the arms of a woman ... The Truth which heaven cannot contain has sprung out of the earth, to be laid in a manger. For whose benefit did so lofty a God become so lowly? Certainly not for his own, but for our great benefit, if we believe” (*Sermones*, 185, 1).

“If we believe”. Here we see the power of faith! God has done everything; he has done the impossible: he was made flesh. His all-powerful love has accomplished something which surpasses all human understanding: the Infinite has become a child, has entered the human family. And yet, this same God cannot enter my heart unless I open the door to him. *Porta fidei!* The door of faith! We could be frightened by this, our inverse omnipotence. This human ability to be closed to God can make us fearful. But see the reality which chases away this gloomy thought, the hope that conquers fear: truth *has sprung up! God is born!* “The earth has yielded its fruits” (*Ps* 67:7). Yes, there is a good earth, a healthy earth, an earth freed of all selfishness and all lack of openness. In this world there is a good soil which God has prepared, that he might come to dwell among us. A dwelling place for his presence in the world. This good earth exists, and today too, in 2012, from this earth truth has sprung up! Consequently, there is hope in the world, a hope in which we can trust, even at the most difficult times and in the most difficult situations. Truth has sprung up, bringing kindness, justice and peace.

Yes, may peace spring up for the people of Syria, deeply wounded and divided by a conflict which does not spare even the defenceless and reaps innocent victims. Once again I appeal for an end to the bloodshed, easier access for the relief of refugees and the displaced, and dialogue in the pursuit of a political solution to the conflict.

May peace spring up in the Land where the Redeemer was born, and may he grant Israelis and Palestinians courage to end to long years of conflict and division, and to embark resolutely on the path of negotiation.

In the countries of North Africa, which are experiencing a major transition in pursuit of a new future – and especially the beloved land of Egypt, blessed by the childhood of Jesus – may citizens work together to build societies founded on justice and respect for the freedom and dignity of every person.

May peace spring up on the vast continent of Asia. May the Child Jesus look graciously on the many peoples who dwell in those lands and, in a special way, upon all those who believe in him. May the King of Peace turn his gaze to the new leaders of the People’s Republic of China for the high task which awaits them. I express my hope that, in fulfilling this task, they will esteem the contribution of the religions, in respect for each, in such a way that they can help to build a fraternal society for the benefit of that noble People and of the whole world.

May the Birth of Christ favour the return of peace in Mali and that of concord in Nigeria, where savage acts of terrorism continue to reap victims, particularly among Christians. May the Redeemer bring help and comfort to the refugees from the east of the Democratic Republic of Congo, and grant peace to Kenya, where brutal attacks have struck the civilian population and places of worship.

May the Child Jesus bless the great numbers of the faithful who celebrate him in Latin America. May he increase their human and Christian virtues, sustain all those forced to leave behind their families and their land, and confirm government leaders in their commitment to development and fighting crime.

Dear brothers and sisters! Kindness and truth, justice and peace have met; they have become *incarnate* in the child born of Mary in Bethlehem. That child is the Son of God; he is God appearing in history. His birth is a flowering of new life for all humanity. May every land become a good earth which receives and brings forth kindness and truth, justice and peace. Happy Christmas to all of you!