



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI TO THE MEMBERS OF CATHOLIC ACTION

Monday, 19 December 2005

Dear Boys and Girls of Italian Catholic Action,

For many years now the children and young people of Catholic Action Rome (ACR) have come to offer the Pope their good wishes. It is a meeting that Pope Paul VI desired in his time and that my Predecessor, John Paul II, whom you all knew, lived each year with great joy. I welcome you with the same joy. I greet each one of you with affection, together with Bishop Francesco Lambiasi, your General Chaplain, and Prof. Luigi Alici, the President, and I sincerely thank you for your good wishes for this Holy Christmas.

On Jesus' Birthday we celebrate God's infinite love for all humankind: "God so loved the world that he gave his Only Son" (Jn 3: 16), and was thus so closely united with our humanity that he wanted to share it to the point of becoming a man among men, one of us. In the Child of Bethlehem, the smallness of God-made-man shows us the greatness of man and the beauty of our dignity as children of God and brothers and sisters of Jesus.

In contemplating this Child, we see what great trust God places in each one of us and what an ample possibility for doing beautiful and great things we are offered in our days, living with Jesus and as Jesus. "Be with us"

This year your formation is accompanied by the slogan "Be with us". Dear children, the Lord Jesus is always with us and always walks with his Church, accompanies her and keeps her safe. Never doubt his presence! The One who comes to meet us, the Emmanuel, "God-with-us", assures us that he is always among his followers: "And know that I am with you always, until the end of the world" (Mt 28: 20).

Always seek the Lord Jesus, grow in friendship with him, learn to listen and to know his words and to recognize him in the poor who live in your communities. Live your lives with joy and enthusiasm, certain of his presence and his free, generous and faithful friendship until his death on the Cross.

"Be with us": the Lord Jesus is truly with us. Be witnesses to everyone, starting with your peers, of the joy of his strong and gentle presence. Tell them that it is beautiful to be friends of Jesus and that following him is worthwhile. Show with your enthusiasm that among the very many ways of living which the world today seems to offer us, all apparently on the same level, it is only by following Jesus that one finds the true meaning of life, hence, true and lasting joy.

Thus, the commitment to peace you have taken on with your brothers and sisters in Sarajevo is also truly a sign of your friendship with Jesus, who is called "Prince of Peace" in the Scriptures.

May your ACR groups be the seed of joy in your parishes, your families and the schools you attend. Thank you again, dear friends, for your visit. I bless you with affection, together with your loved ones, your teachers, your chaplains and all the friends of the ACR. Merry Christmas!

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