



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI TO THE CHILDREN OF ITALIAN CATHOLIC ACTION

Consistory Hall

Thursday, 21 December 2006

Dear Boys and Girls of Italian Catholic Action,

This year you again wanted to visit the Pope, just before holy Christmas. I welcome you with affection and I warmly thank you for your presence full of joy and enthusiasm as always.

Through you I greet all the children of A.C.R. in the Italian Dioceses, and those whom you represent here. I cordially greet your General Assistant, Mons. Francesco Lambiasi, and your President, Prof. Luigi Alici, together with all your teachers.

You have told me that this year your formation process is taking the way of beauty [*bello*] in the search for truth [*vero*]. You have therefore chosen a simple and effective slogan: "*Bello, vero!*". Christmas is the great mystery of the Truth and Beauty of God, who comes among us for the salvation of all.

The birth of Jesus is not a fairy tale: it is a story that really happened, occurring in Bethlehem 2,000 years ago. Faith enables us to recognize in that tiny Child, born of the Virgin Mary, the true Son of God who for love of us was made man.

"The King of Heaven comes to a cold and frigid grotto", says the Christmas carol, "Tu scendi dalle stelle", known throughout the world.

In the face of the tiny Jesus we contemplate the face of God, who does not reveal himself in strength or power but in the defencelessness and frail condition of an infant. This "Divine Child", wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger with the maternal care of his Mother, Mary, reveals all the goodness and infinite beauty of God. He shows the fidelity and tenderness of the

boundless love with which God surrounds each one of us.

This is why we celebrate Christmas, reliving the same experience as the shepherds of Bethlehem. Together with so many fathers and mothers who toil constantly every day, facing continuous sacrifices, let us celebrate with the little ones, the sick and the poor, because with the birth of Jesus, the Heavenly Father responded to the desire in our hearts for truth, forgiveness and peace.

And he responded with such great love that we find it surprising: no one could ever have imagined it if Jesus had not revealed it to us!

The amazement that we feel in the face of the enchantment of Christmas is to a certain extent reflected in the wonder of every birth and invites us to recognize the Child Jesus in all children, who are the joy of the Church and the hope of the world.

The newborn Child who comes into the world in Bethlehem is the same Jesus who walked on the roads of Galilee and gave his life for us on the Cross; it is the same Jesus who was raised up and, after his Ascension into Heaven, continues to guide his Church with the power of his Spirit. This is the beautiful and great truth of our Christian faith!

Dear children of A.C.R., the Pope loves you, he has confidence in you and today he entrusts to you the task of being friends and witnesses of Jesus, who came to Bethlehem among us.

Is it not a beautiful thing to make him all the more known among your friends, in the city, in the parishes and in your families?

The Church needs you to be close to all the children and boys and girls who live in Italy. Witness that Jesus takes nothing from your joy, but makes you more human, true and beautiful.

Thank you again for your visit. I bless you with affection, together with your loved ones, your teachers, the assistants and all the friends of A.C.R.

Merry Christmas!

© Copyright 2006 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana