



# The Holy See

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**MEETING OF THE HOLY FATHER  
WITH THE ROME'S UNIVERSITY STUDENTS  
ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI**

Saint Peter's Basilica

Thursday, 13 December 2007

*Dear Friends,*

I am very pleased to meet so many of you at this traditional encounter close to the Birth of Christ. I greet and thank Cardinal Camillo Ruini who has celebrated the Eucharist, together with the University Chaplains, to whom I address a cordial thought. I greet the Authorities, in the first place the Minister for Universities with the Rectors, the Professors and all the students. I am grateful to the Rector of the University's Biomedical Campus and to the student of the Law Faculty of *Roma Tre*, who in the name of you all have addressed to me expressions of affection and good wishes. I warmly exchange these sentiments, offering good wishes to each one of you for a peaceful and holy Christmas. I would like to reserve a special greeting to the young people of the Albanian delegation who have brought back to Rome the icon of Mary *Sedes Sapientiae*, and to those of the Romanian delegation who will receive the image of Mary this evening so that it may be a "pilgrim" of peace and hope in their Country.

Dear young university students, at this familiar encounter, permit me to bring to your attention two brief reflections. The first regards the journey of your spiritual formation. The Diocese of Rome wanted to give greater emphasis to young university students' preparation for Confirmation; therefore, your pilgrimage to Assisi last 10 November represented the "summons" and this evening your attendance has been the "response". In fact, about 150 of you were presented as candidates for the Sacrament of Confirmation, which you will receive at the next Pentecost Vigil. This is a worthy initiative that fits well into the itinerary of preparation for the [World Youth Day scheduled to take place in Sydney in July 2008](#).

To the candidates for the Sacrament of Confirmation and to all of you, dear young friends, I would like to say: direct your gaze to the Virgin Mary and from her "yes", learn also to pronounce your "yes" to the divine call. The Holy Spirit enters into our lives in the measure in which we open our hearts with our "yes": the fuller the "yes", the fuller is the gift of his presence. To understand better, we can refer to a very simple reality: light. If a window's shutters are hermetically sealed, although the light is shining it cannot illuminate the house. If there is a little fissure, a ray of light enters; if the shutters are opened a little more, the room begins to lighten up, but only when completely opened do the sun's rays illuminate and warm the environment. Dear friends, Mary is greeted by the Angel as "full of grace", which means exactly this: her heart and her life are totally open to God, and this is why she is completely pervaded by his grace. May she help you to make yourselves a free and full "yes" to God, so that you can be renewed, indeed, transformed by the light and joy of the Holy Spirit.

The second reflection that I wish to propose to you concerns [the recent Encyclical on Christian hope entitled, as you know, \*Spe Salvi\*](#), "In hope we were saved", words taken from St Paul's Letter to the Romans (8: 24). Ideally, I consign it to you, dear university students of Rome, and through you to the whole university, scholastic, cultural and educational world. Is not the theme of hope particularly suited to young people? In particular I suggest you make the part of the [Encyclical](#) that concerns the hope of the modern age an object of your reflection and discussion, even in groups. In the 17th century, Europe experienced an authentic epochal turning point and from then on it has increasingly confirmed a mentality which views human progress alone as the work of science and technology, while faith concerns only the salvation of the soul, a purely individual salvation. The two great idea-powers of modernity, reason and freedom, are as it were separated from God in order to become autonomous and to cooperate in the construction of the "kingdom of man", practically in opposition to the Kingdom of God. From here a materialistic concept spread, nourished by the hope that, by changing the economic and political structures, one could finally bring about a just society where peace, freedom and equality reign. This process, which is not deprived of values and historical motivations, contains, however, a fundamental error: man, in fact, is not only the product of determined economic and social conditions; technical progress does not necessarily coincide with the moral growth of the person; rather, without ethical principles science, technology and politics can be used, as has happened and unfortunately still happens, not for the good but harm of individuals and of humanity.

Dear friends, it is such current themes that stimulate your reflection and favour even more the positive comparison and collaboration that already exist among all State, private and pontifical universities. The city of Rome continues to be a privileged place of study and cultural development, as took place last June with the meeting of over 3,000 European university professors. Rome is also the model of hospitality for foreign students and I am pleased to greet, in this regard, the university delegations from the various European and American cities. May the light of Christ, which we invoke through the intercession of Mary, Star of Hope, and of the holy virgin and martyr Lucy, whose memory we recall today, always enlighten your life. With these

wishes, I whole-heartedly wish you and your relatives a Christmas rich in grace and peace, while I warmly impart the Apostolic Blessing to all.

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