



# The Holy See

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VISIT TO THE "GIFT OF MARY" HOUSE CONDUCTED  
BY THE MISSIONARIES OF CHARITY IN THE VATICAN

## *ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI*

Friday, 4 January 2008

*Dear Friends,*

I have come to pay you a Visit at the beginning of the new year while we are still breathing the family atmosphere of Christmas, and I immediately take this opportunity to express to you all my most fervent and cordial good wishes. I greet with affection those of you present here together with those in the other rooms of this House, which is called "Gift of Mary", who are watching us and are joining in by means of television link-up. For many years, when I was Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, I would spend several hours of the day near your praiseworthy institution, desired by my venerable Predecessor, the Servant of God John Paul II, and entrusted by him to [Bl. Teresa of Calcutta](#). Thus, I was able to appreciate the generous service of Gospel charity which the Missionaries of Charity have been carrying out for almost 20 years now with the help and collaboration of many people of good will. I am here with you today to renew my gratitude to the Sisters, the volunteer workers and the various collaborators. I am here above all to express my spiritual closeness to you, dear friends, who in this House find a loving welcome, attention, understanding and daily support, both material and spiritual. I am here to tell you that the Pope loves you and is close to you. I thank the Superior of the Missionaries of Charity who is ending her service and has expressed your common sentiments, addressing kind words of welcome to me on behalf of all. I greet the new Superior who is taking on responsibility for the House with that style of docile availability which is typical of the spiritual daughters of [Mother Teresa of Calcutta](#).

When this House was founded, [Bl. Mother Teresa](#) desired to call it "Gift of Mary", hoping, as it were, that it might always be possible to experience in it the love of the Blessed Virgin. For anyone

who knocks at the door, it is in fact a gift of Mary to feel welcomed by the loving arms of the Sisters and volunteers. The presence of those who are ready to listen to people in difficulty and serve them with that very attitude which impelled Mary to go straightaway to St Elizabeth is another gift of Mary. May this style of Gospel love always seal and distinguish your vocation so that, in addition to material aid, you may communicate to all whom you meet daily on your path that same passion for Christ and that shining "smile of God" which enlivened Mother Teresa's life.

Mother Teresa used to like to say: it is Christmas every time we allow Jesus to love others through us. Christmas is a mystery of love, the mystery of Love. The Christmas season, re-presenting the Birth of Jesus in Bethlehem for our contemplation, shows us the infinite goodness of God who, by making himself a Child, desired to satisfy the needs of human poverty and loneliness; he accepted to dwell among us, sharing our daily difficulties; he did not hesitate to bear with us the burden of existence with its effort and anxiety. He was born for us in order to stay with us and to offer to each one who opens to him the door of his or her heart the gift of his joy, his peace, his love. Since he was born in a grotto, because there was no room for him elsewhere, Jesus experienced the hardships that many of you yourselves experience. Christmas helps us understand that God never abandons us and always comes to meet our needs. He protects us and is concerned with each one of us, because every person, especially the lowliest and most defenceless, is precious in the eyes of the Father, rich in tenderness and mercy. For us and for our salvation he sent into the world his Son, whom we contemplate in the mystery of Christmas as the Emmanuel, God-with-us. With these sentiments, I renew to you all my most fervent good wishes for the new year which has just begun, assuring you of my daily remembrance in prayer. And as I invoke the motherly protection of Mary, Mother of Christ and our Mother, I affectionately impart my Blessing to you all.