



The Holy See

VISIT TO CHILDREN RECOVERING IN THE DEPARTMENT OF PEDIATRICS
OF ROME'S "AGOSTINO GEMELLI" HOSPITAL

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

Wednesday, 5 January 2011

*Your Eminence,
Dear Priests,
Academic Authorities,
Executives,
Medical and Paramedical Personnel,
Dear Children, Parents and Friends,*

Why have I come here to be with you today, a day on which we begin to celebrate the Solemnity of the Epiphany? First of all to say "thank you". Thank you to all of you children who have welcomed me. I would like to tell you that I love you and that I am close to you with my prayers and my affection, and also to give you strength in facing this illness.

I would then like also to thank your parents, your relatives, the executives and all the hospital personnel, who with expertise and charity care for human suffering. I would like to thank in particular the team of the Department of Paediatrics and the Centre for the care of children with spina bifida. I bless the people, the dedication and these areas in which love is shown in practice to the smallest and the neediest.

Dear children and young people, I wanted to come to visit you also to imitate, a little, the Magi, as you have done; the Magi presented Jesus with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh to adore him and show their affection. Today I too have brought you some gifts, so that you may feel, through this small sign, the Pope's kindness, closeness and affection. But I would like everyone, adults and children, in this Christmas Season to remember the greatest gift that God has given to each

one of us.

Let us look inside the grotto of Bethlehem and in the crib, who do we see? Who do we meet? Mary, Joseph and especially an infant, small, in need of attention, care and love. That baby is Jesus, that baby is God himself who wanted to come to the earth to show us how much he loves us, it is God who made himself a child like you, to tell you that he is always near you and to tell each one of us that each child bears his face.

Now, before concluding, I cannot but extend a cordial greeting to all the personnel and patients of this large hospital. I encourage the various initiatives of good and of voluntary work, as well as the institutions which give quality to the commitment to the service of life, I am thinking in particular in this circumstance, of the Paul VI International Scientific Institute, which aims at promoting responsible procreation.

Thanks again to you all! The Pope loves you all!