



The Holy See

JOHN PAUL II

ANGELUS

Third Sunday of Advent, 12 December 2004

1. The feast of Christmas is approaching and in many places, such as here in St Peter's Square, *the Christmas crib* is already being set up. Small or large, simple or elaborate, it is a familiar and most vivid *representation of Christmas*. The Nativity scene is a feature of our culture and art, but above all it is a *sign of faith* in God, who in Bethlehem came "and dwelt among us" (Jn 1: 14).
 2. As I do every year, in a little while I shall bless the Baby Jesus figurines that on the Holy Night will be placed in the Christmas cribs, where St Joseph and Our Lady are already silent witnesses of a sublime mystery. With their loving gaze they invite us to watch and pray in order to welcome the divine Saviour, who comes to bring the joy of Christmas to the world.
 3. Today's liturgy, the Third Sunday of Advent known as "Gaudete" Sunday, invites us to a foretaste of this joy. Let us ask the "Virgin of waiting" that the desire to encounter the Lord who is now at hand may be alive in Christians and in all people of good will.
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After the Angelus:

Today, in the Diocese of Rome, we are celebrating the *Day for Building New Churches* in the City's suburbs. In recent years, 54 communities have received a new church, but at least another 20 are still waiting. I therefore encourage you to be generous so that all may find a place in which to grow in faith and in Christian life.

I also remind you that on Tuesday, 14 December, at 5: 30 p.m. in St Peter's Basilica, I will preside at *Holy Mass for university students* of the Roman Athenaeums. I invite all to join in this

celebration.

I greet the Spanish-speaking pilgrims, especially the faithful from the Dioceses of Granada, Guadix-Baza, Málaga, Madrid, Oviedo, Segovia and Zamora. Let us rejoice! The Lord is near and comes to save us!

Lastly, I greet the pilgrims present, in particular the children of Rome with their "Baby Jesus" figurines, the Monteverdi Choir from Val di Non, the Diocesan Youth Choir from Alessandria and the faithful from Fiano Romano.

I wish you all a good Sunday!

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