



The Holy See

MASS FOR THE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN ROME

HOMILY OF JOHN PAUL II

Tuesday, 11 December 2001

"Behold, the Lord comes with might" (Is 40,10).

In the Advent season that we are living, the Prophet's words can have a far-reaching impact. Advent is the season of watching and waiting for the Messiah, who "*comes with might*" to set his people free and whom we will welcome in a few days in the poverty of Bethlehem. He will come as a victorious King at the end of time, but now he returns continually "to renew the world". We must learn to read the "signs" of his presence in the events of history.

Do not keep quiet about Christ's truth: cry it out loudly!

Let me repeat once again, especially to you: "Do not be afraid!". "Put out into the deep", and go to meet Jesus confidently, since in him you will be free and safe, even when the paths of life become steep and threatening. Trust in him, young *university students from various European nations*. Welcoming him means that you open to him the treasures of each culture and nation, with its originality, in the dynamic process of a dialogue enriched by a peaceful exchange of the rich cultural multiplicity you represent.

"A voice says, "Cry"" (Is 40,6). The Prophet's exhortation rings out strongly in our congregation. It is addressed to you, who make up the university and cultural world. You too must cry out, dear friends. Indeed, it is impossible to keep quiet about Christ's truth. It asks to be announced, not arrogantly but firmly and proudly. This is the *parrhesia* of which the New Testament speaks; the cultural allegiance of Christians must bear its mark.

Cry out, young university students, by witnessing to your faith! Do not be satisfied with a mediocre

life without spiritual enthusiasm that is bent only upon achieving your own immediate personal advantage.

Europe needs a new intellectual vitality. A vitality that creates plans for an austere life, capable of commitment and sacrifice, that is simple in its legitimate aspirations, clear in its realization, transparent in its acts. It needs new and bold thought, free and creative, quick to grasp, in the perspective of faith, life's demands and challenges, to set forth clearly the central truths of the human person.

"All mankind is grass, and all their glory like the flower of the field" (Is 40,6).

The Liturgy of Advent directs our eyes towards the eternal truths that make us face daily events with realistic wisdom. Furthermore, the Prophet's words ring out as an invitation not to give in to the illusions of a progress that does not conform to the divine plan. In fact, however amazing modern scientific and technological development may be, however promising it appears for humanity's future, it sometimes brings with it terrifying shadows of destruction and death, as we have recently realized. Everyone must respect the inviolable limits that reference to morality can offer us. When men and women lose their sense of these limits and set themselves up as legislators for the world, they forget that they are on this earth like the grass and the flowers of the field that fade away.

May the divine light enlighten all who labour in the important fields of biological, chemical and physical research and progress, so that they may come close to man and creation with humility and wisdom. May academics and scientists always be aware of the lofty mission that Providence entrusts to them! Dear brothers and sisters, you too cooperate in this wonderful mission. In investigating the secrets of the cosmos and of the human being, you are drawing ever closer to the unfathomable mystery of God.

May the constant intercession of Mary, *Seat of Wisdom*, and attentive Mother sustain you. May she guide you in your quest for goodness and truth, in an attitude of ever docile listening, like her, to the life-giving Word of God.