



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER TO THE CHILDREN OF THE ITALIAN CATHOLIC ACTION

Tuesday, 21 December 1999

Dear Boys and Girls of Italian Catholic Action,

I am pleased to welcome you today, as I do every year, at this meeting which gives us the opportunity to exchange best wishes for a Holy Christmas and the New Year. With great affection I greet each of you along with the national president of Catholic Action and the general chaplain. I greet you one and all, and embrace you with warm affection. I thank you for the words and sentiments you have expressed to me. They are particularly welcome because they are accompanied by your remembrance in prayer. Thank you, dear children, for all this.

We have now reached Holy Christmas, a very significant celebration for Christian families. My thoughts naturally turn to your families and to all the families of the world. When you go home, take the Pope's greeting to your loved ones and his most fervent wishes for serenity and peace. At the same time, remember all those who will be unable to spend these holy days in tranquil joy.

Christmas is a special day that invites us to solidarity and to love; it invites us to open our hearts to our brothers and sisters, especially to those in need. The Child Jesus, born in Bethlehem, brought the world the precious gift of Love so that, like a radiant light, it would dispel the darkness of selfishness and sadness from man's heart and fill his mind with true joy. This is what I wish for each of you and for the various groups of Catholic Action you represent: may you rediscover divine love, which surrounds human life and gives it full meaning. May Our Lady, who gave the world our Redeemer at Bethlehem, help you to welcome him into your hearts.

Dear boys and girls, this year the joy of Christmas is combined with that of the Jubilee Year, which will begin precisely on the Holy Night with the solemn opening of the Holy Door in the Vatican Basilica. Prepare yourselves to observe fervently this extraordinary time of grace; be apostles to

your peers by helping them to understand the genuine spirit of the Holy Year and to live it deeply.

Once again I thank you for this welcome visit and I cordially bless you, your friends, your families and all who guide you on your path of human and spiritual growth. Happy Christmas!