



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS **GENERAL AUDIENCE** Wednesday, 30 December 2015 [\[Multimedia\]](#)

Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

In these days of Christmas the Child Jesus is placed before us. I am certain that in our homes many families still have a nativity scene arranged, continuing this beautiful tradition brought about by St Francis of Assisi which keeps alive in our hearts the mystery of God who became man.

Devotion to the Child Jesus is widespread. Many saints cultivated this devotion in their daily prayers, and wished to model their lives after that of the Child Jesus. I think in particular of St Thérèse of Lisieux, who as a Carmelite nun took the name Thérèse of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face. She is also a Doctor of the Church who knew how to live and witness to the “spiritual childhood” which is assimilated through meditation, as the Virgin Mary taught, on the humility of God who became small for us. This is a great mystery. God is humble! We, who are proud and full of vanity, believe we are something big: we are nothing! He, the Great One, is humble and becomes a child. This is a true mystery. God is humble. This is beautiful!

There was a time in which, in the divine-human Person of Christ, God was a child, and this must hold a particular significance for our faith. It is true that his death on the cross and his Resurrection are the highest expressions of his redeeming love, however let us not forget that the whole of his earthly life is revelation and teaching. In the Christmas season we remember his childhood. In order to grow in faith we will need to contemplate the Child Jesus more often. Certainly, we know nothing of this period of his life. The rare indications that we possess refer to the imposition of his name eight days after his birth and his presentation at the Temple (cf. Lk 2:21-28); in addition to this, the visit of the Magi and the ensuing escape to Egypt (cf. Mt 2:1-23). Then, there is a great leap to 12 years of age, when with Mary and Joseph he goes in pilgrimage to Jerusalem for Passover, and instead of returning with his parents, he remains in the Temple to speak with the doctors of the law.

As we see, we know little of the Child Jesus, but we can learn much about him if we look to the lives of children. It is a beautiful habit that parents and grandparents have, that of watching what the children do.

We discover, first of all, that children want our attention. They have to be at the centre — why? Because they are proud? No! Because they need to feel protected. It is important that we too place Jesus at the centre of our life and know, even if it may seem paradoxical, that it is our responsibility to protect him. He wants to be in our embrace, he wants to be tended to and to be able to fix his gaze on ours. Additionally, we must make the Child Jesus smile in order to show him our love and our joy that he is in our midst. His smile is a sign of the love that gives us the assurance of being loved. Children, lastly, love to play. Playing with children, however, means abandoning our logic in order to enter theirs. If we want to have fun it is necessary to understand what they like, and not to be selfish and make them do the things that we like. It is a lesson for us. Before Jesus we are called to abandon our pretense of autonomy — and this is the crux of the matter: our pretense of autonomy — in order to instead accept the true form of liberty, which consists in knowing and serving whom we have before us. He, the Child, is the Son of God who comes to save us. He has come among us to show us the face of the Father abounding in love and mercy. Therefore, let us hold the Child Jesus tightly in our arms; let us place ourselves at his service. He is the font of love and serenity. It will be beautiful today, when we get home, to go to the nativity scene and kiss the Baby Jesus and say: “Jesus, I want to be humble like you, humble like God”, and to ask him for this grace.

Special greetings:

I invite prayers for the victims of the natural disasters that have recently struck the United States, Great Britain and South America, particularly Paraguay, sadly claiming lives, displacing many people and causing extensive damage. May the Lord give comfort to those peoples, and may fraternal solidarity support them in their needs.

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today's Audience, including the pilgrimage groups from Norway, the Philippines and the United States of America. I thank the choirs for their praise of God in song. With prayerful good wishes that the Church's celebration of the Jubilee of Mercy will be a moment of grace and spiritual renewal for all, I invoke upon you and your families an abundance of joy and peace in the Lord. Happy New Year!

I wish for all that the light of Christ, which shined upon mankind on Christmas Eve, may spread in your daily life.

I address a special thought to *young people*, to the *sick* and to *newlyweds*. May the icon of the nativity scene which we contemplate in these days help you, dear *young people*, to imitate the Holy Family, model of true love. May it sustain you, dear *sick people*, to offer your suffering in union with that of Jesus for the salvation of the world. May it encourage you, dear *newlyweds*, to edify your household on the rock of the Word of God, rendering it, on the example of that of Nazareth, a welcoming place, filled with love, understanding and forgiveness.

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