



The Holy See

JOHN PAUL II

GENERAL AUDIENCE

Wednesday, 29 December 2004

Comment on Christmastide

1. *"In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son"* (Heb 1: 1-2).

In the Christmas season these opening words of the Letter to the Hebrews acquire special eloquence. In the Holy Night, God addresses his definitive Word of salvation to the humanity of every time and every place. The Only-begotten Son of the Father, in becoming man, came to dwell among us. Thus, the expectation of the Messiah proclaimed by the prophets was fulfilled. The liturgy of this season is all meditation and a deepening of the mystery of the Incarnation.

2. Let us continue to reflect before the crib! In this traditional representation of the Nativity scene, "the eternal and almighty Creator" speaks to us through the Son, Lord of the universe, who became a child in order to meet human beings. The Virgin Mary was the first to welcome him and to present him to the world. Joseph was beside her, called as Father to be custodian of the Redeemer.

The angels complete the scene, festively proclaiming "glory to God" and announcing "peace to all men" (cf. Lk 2: 14), along with the shepherds, representing the poor and humble of the earth. In a few days the Magi will also arrive, coming from afar to adore the King of the universe.

The liturgy of Christmastide invites us to hasten joyously to the stable at Bethlehem to meet Jesus Christ, our Saviour: "Come, faithful! Come, let us adore the Lord Jesus!". Let us open the doors of our hearts to him, so that he will accompany us now and throughout the year that is about to

begin.

To special groups

Lastly, I address my cordial greeting to the *young people*, the *sick* and the *newly-weds*. May the light of Christ, that shone upon humanity on Christmas Night, shine upon you and light your steps in the New Year.

HOLY FATHER'S APPEAL

The news that continues to arrive from Asia demonstrates the magnitude of the huge catastrophe that has hit India, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Thailand in particular.

The international community and many humanitarian organizations are mobilizing their forces to go straight to the rescue. Many charitable institutions of the Church are doing likewise. In the Christmas atmosphere of these days, I invite all believers and people of good will to contribute generously to this great work of solidarity for the peoples who have already been harshly tried and are now exposed to the risk of epidemics. I feel very close to them with my affection and prayers, especially those who are injured and homeless, as I entrust to divine mercy the countless persons who have lost their lives.

Let us pray for them all, singing the Our Father together.