



The Holy See

***PASTORAL VISIT OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE ROMAN PARISH
OF "SANTA MARIA DELLE GRAZIE" IN CASAL BOCCONE***

Third Sunday of Advent - "Gaudete" Sunday, 11 December 2011

Greeting of the Holy Father to the children:

Dear Children,

I wish you all a good Sunday. We know that Christmas is approaching: let us prepare not only with gifts but with our hearts. Let us remember that Christ the Lord is near us, he enters our lives and gives us light and joy. St Paul says today in his Letter to the Thessalonians: "pray constantly". This does not of course mean that we must always speak in words of prayer but it does mean that in our hearts we must not lose touch with God. If this contact exists, a factor of joy exists. I wish all of you all the joy of Christmas and all the joy of the presence in our hearts of the Child Jesus Christ who is God. My best wishes! Have a good Sunday and a Happy Christmas from this moment!

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After Mass, outside the church, the Pope took his leave of the parish community of Santa Maria delle Grazie and said extemporaneously:

Dear friends, a spiritual embrace for you all. Thank you for your presence and for your warm welcome. This cordiality, so lovely and so open, the open, lively chorus, is what it was like in Africa. It gives me great joy to see how the Church lives here in the City of Rome: in this new parish people really participate in the Eucharist and are preparing for Christmas.

Preparing for Christmas is very difficult today. And I know there are so many commitments. But preparing for Christmas is not only buying, preparing and thinking, it is also keeping in touch with

the Lord, going to meet him. And it seems to me very important not to forget this dimension. I have already explained to the children that St Paul said: “pray constantly”, in other words do not lose your contact with God. And this is not a burden in addition to all the others but rather the strength that helps us to do all that is necessary.

In this regard, I wish you an enduring contact with Jesus, hence all his joy and his strength in order to live in this world. Have a good Advent and a Happy Christmas! I thank you all.