



The Holy See

URBI ET ORBI MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE JOHN PAUL II CHRISTMAS 2002

1. *"To us a child is born,
to us a son is given"* (Is 9:5).

Today the mystery of Christmas is renewed:
this Child who brings salvation to the world
is also born for the men and women of our own time,
bringing joy and peace for all.
We approach the crib with emotion;
together with Mary we go to meet
the Long-Awaited of the Nations, the Redeemer of humanity.

Cum Maria contemplemur Christi vultum.

With Mary let us contemplate the face of Christ:
in that Child, wrapped in swaddling cloths
and laid in the manger (cf. Lk 2:7),
it is God himself who comes to visit us,
to guide our feet in the way of peace (cf. Lk 1:79).
Mary watches him, caresses him and keeps him warm,
pondering the meaning of the wondrous signs
which surround the mystery of Christmas.

2. Christmas is a mystery of joy!

The Angels sang in the night:
*"Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased"* (Lk 2:14).
To the shepherds they described the event
as *"a great joy for all the people"* (cf. Lk 2:10).

Joy, despite distance from home,
 the poverty of the manger,
 people's indifference,
 the hostility of power.

A mystery of joy nonetheless,

for in the City of David

"to you is born this day a Saviour" (Lk 2:11).

The Church shares in this same joy,
 surrounded today by the light of the Son of God:

the darkness can never obscure it.

It is the glory of the Eternal Word,
 who out of love has become one of us.

3. Christmas is a mystery of love!

The love of the Father, who has sent into the world
 his only-begotten Son,
 to bestow on us the gift of his own life (cf. 1 Jn 4:8-9).

The love of "God-with-us", Emmanuel,
 who came to earth in order to die on the Cross.

In the cold stable, wrapped in silence,
 the Virgin Mother, with prophetic intuition,
 already tastes the violent drama of Calvary,
 the traumatic struggle between darkness and light,
 between death and life, between hatred and love.

The Prince of Peace, born today in Bethlehem,
 will give his life on Golgotha,
 so that love may reign on earth.

4. Christmas is a mystery of peace!

From the cave of Bethlehem
 there rises today an urgent appeal
 to the world not to yield
 to mistrust, suspicion and discouragement,
 even though the tragic reality of terrorism
 feeds uncertainties and fears.

Believers of all religions,
 together with men and women of good will,
 by outlawing all forms of intolerance and discrimination,
 are called to build peace:

in the Holy Land, above all, to put an end once and for all
 to the senseless spiral of blind violence, and in the Middle East,

to extinguish the ominous smouldering of a conflict
which, with the joint efforts of all, can be avoided;
in Africa too, where devastating famines and tragic internal conflicts
are aggravating the already precarious conditions of entire peoples,
although here and there signs of hope are present;
in Latin America, in Asia, in other parts of the world,
where political, economic and social crises
disturb the serenity of many families and nations.
May humanity accept the Christmas message of peace!

5. Adorable mystery of the Incarnate Word!

Together with you, O Virgin Mother, may we stop and reflect
at the manger where the Child lies,
to share your own amazement
at the immense "condescension" of God.
Grant us your own eyes, O Mary,
that we may understand the mystery
hidden within the frail limbs of your Son.
Teach us to recognize his face
in the children of every race and culture.
Help us to be credible witnesses
of his message of peace and love,
so that the men and women of our own time,
still torn by conflicts and unspeakable violence,
may also recognize in the Child
cradled in your arms
the one Saviour of the world,
the endless source of that true peace
for which every heart profoundly yearns.