

Pope Paul's Message at Christmas

'We Go Forth to Meet Him'

Following is the Christmas message delivered by Pope Paul Dec. 25 from the Central Loggia of St. Peter's.

"The Word became flesh and dwelt among us."

This is the event we commemorate today, because it is exactly and splendidly historical. And we shall always celebrate it because it concerns the destiny of humanity. And we are included; humble and joyous as are all those who, in the shadow of a restless civilization that is magnificent and fascinating but often forgetful of its transcendent and irrevocable vocation, lift up their head to the piercing and radiant light of a Brother, who appears far off in time but who is close with his permanent presence. He has been called and he is, the light of the world, Christ the Lord.

Yes, because this is Christmas. But it does not yet reveal to us all its adorable mystery in this tumultuous assembly, which is the world and which attempts in its obscurity to reveal us to ourselves. Christmas is the feast of humanity precisely because the Man Christ Jesus has come among us. He is our Redeemer, our Brother, our Teacher, our Shepherd, our Judge - the one who, for our salvation holds the keys of our supreme destiny.

We go forth to meet him, chanting the praises of his glory, recalling that his glory, according to the famous expression of St. Irenaeus with reference to God "is the living man." Christian humanism begins with the Birth of the Son of God becoming the Son of Man. Greeting the Birth of the new firstborn of the human race, we proclaim together our enthusiasm for the humanity which find its Head in Christ.

Brethren, let us honor in the Birth of Christ the incipient life of man. Human life is a creature of God, marked with his image and likeness, conceived in that love which makes two beings, a man and a woman, one single life brought forth indeed not without maternal affliction, but for the joy of the world.

Let us honor infancy, it too a creature of God, the joy of society, and called to the mysterious rebirth of baptism, which is a pledge of the life that will not die.

Let us honor women, equal in dignity to men, called to the brauty of the privileged love of consecrated virginity, or more often to that likewise sacrosanct love of conjugal life and to the incomparable ministry of motherhood.

Let us honor the young, to whom the young Jesus is a

brother - Jesus who "increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man."

Let us honor man in the fullness of his manhood, in which Jesus was an example of work, of life in society and of the farsighted wisdom that looks beyond the scene of the senses and of temporal phenomena.

Let us honor man in his infirmity - infirmity that obtained from Christ, the help of human piety and of miraculous cure, and the charism of that merit which likens it to him crucified and gives it value.

Let us honor fallen and sinful humanity, for which the regenerating love of Christ had its preference - which for us is almost inconceivable - and to which it reserved its admirable rehabilitation.

Let us honor man, whoever he may be - in whom the likeness of the divine image of Christ is reflected - and wherever there is greater need of comfort and of help.

Let us honor man who advances in the conquest of the earth and of the universe; he was destined for this by God.

And finally let us honor life that has died in justice, to which Christ guarantees



'Hi!' from a Pope Paul VI, enroute to a pre-Christmas ceremony, pats the cheek of a young admirer as he is born on his portable throne in Vatican City. In his address, the pontiff cited the Mafia as one of the "chronic and ingrained vices" of society, stating that a Christian spirit can do more to combat crime than prisons and police. (RNS)

his peace and his wonderful resurrection.

This is our humanism, the humanism of our life as a preparation for fullness, for terminal happiness, victorious one day over death, and destined to make up mystically the Body of Christ in a reality that surpasses every expectation.

This is no longer the admirable humanism of past centuries, the ideal

conceived and expressed in the recollection of past forms of classicism. Nor is it even that which motivates many people of our time, who are inebriated with the illusion of being able to produce a humanism that springs only from scientific progress and social evolution, forgetting two things on which experience counsels reflection: the innate insufficiency of man to be perfect in himself, and the inextinguishable thirst

that destines him to find in God that infinite satisfaction of which he is constitutitionally in need.

We repeat our respect and our good wishes to humanity, "a Savior is born; he is Christ the Lord."

And now in his name, we shall give you our cordial blessing, which we accompany with our good wishes.

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