

A MESSAGE OF HOPE RESOUNDS IN THE LITURGY OF ADVENT

VATICAN CITY, 7 DEC 2008 (VIS) - At midday today the Pope appeared at the window of his private study to pray the Angelus with the thousands of people crowding St. Peter's Square below.

"A message full of hope resounds in the liturgy of Advent, which invites us to raise our eyes to the furthest horizon yet at the same time to recognise the signs of God-with-us here in the present", said the Holy Father.

In Advent the Lord wishes "to speak to the heart of His people and, through them, to all humanity, in order to announce salvation. Today too the Church raises her voice: 'In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord'. For people exhausted by poverty and hunger, for the streams of refugees, for those who suffer serious and systematic violations of their rights, the Church is as a sentinel on the high mountain of faith, and announces: 'See, the Lord God comes with might, and His arm rules for Him'.

"This prophetic announcement was realised in Jesus Christ", he added. "With His preaching, and subsequently with His death and resurrection, He fulfilled the ancient promises, showing us a more profound and universal perspective. He inaugurated an exodus, not just an earthly exodus, historical and hence provisional, but radical and definitive: the passage from the kingdom of evil to the Kingdom of God, from the domination of sin and death to that of love and life. Thus Christian hope goes beyond the legitimate expectation of social and political freedom, because what Jesus inaugurated was a new humanity, that comes 'from God' but at the same time grows in our own land in the degree to which it allows itself to be imbued by the Spirit of the Lord".

Benedict XVI highlighted the importance of "entering fully into the logic of faith by believing in God and His plan of salvation, at the same time committing ourselves to building His Kingdom. Justice and peace are indeed a gift of God, but they require men and women who are 'good earth', ready to accept the good seed of His Word".