

Pope Francis' message from St Peter's Basilica



Dear brothers and sisters, Happy Christmas!

Christ is born for us, let us rejoice in the day of our salvation!

Let us open our hearts to receive the grace of this day, which is Christ himself. Jesus is the radiant “day” which has dawned on the horizon of humanity. A day of mercy, in which God our Father has revealed his great tenderness to the entire world. A day of light, which dispels the darkness of fear and anxiety. A day of peace, which makes for encounter, dialogue and, above all, reconciliation. A day of joy: a “great joy” for the poor, the lowly and for all the people (cf. Lk 2:10).

On this day, Jesus, the Saviour is born of the Virgin Mary. The Crib makes us see the “sign” which God has given us: “a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger” (Lk 2:12). Like the shepherds of Bethlehem, may we too set out to see this sign, this event which is renewed yearly in the Church. Christmas is an event which is renewed

in every family, parish and community which receives the love of God made incarnate in Jesus Christ. Like Mary, the Church shows to everyone the “sign” of God: the Child whom she bore in her womb and to whom she gave birth, yet who is the Son of the Most High, since he “is of the Holy Spirit” (Mt 1:20). He is truly the Saviour, for he is the Lamb of God who takes upon himself the sin of the world (cf. Jn 1:29). With the shepherds, let us bow down before the Lamb, let us worship God’s goodness made flesh, and let us allow tears of repentance to fill our eyes and cleanse our hearts. This is something we all need!

He alone, he alone can save us. Only God’s mercy can free humanity from the many forms of evil, at times monstrous evil, which selfishness spawns in our midst. The grace of God can convert hearts and offer mankind a way out of humanly insoluble situations.

Where God is born, hope is born. He brings hope. Where God is born, peace is born. And where peace is born, there is no longer room for hatred and for war. Yet precisely where the incarnate Son of God came into the world, tensions and violence persist, and peace remains a gift to be implored and built. May Israelis and Palestinians resume direct dialogue and reach an agreement which will enable the two peoples to live together in harmony, ending a conflict which has long set them at odds, with grave repercussions for the entire region.

We pray to the Lord that the agreement reached in the United Nations may succeed in halting as quickly as possible the clash of arms in Syria and in remedying the extremely grave humanitarian situation of its suffering people. It is likewise urgent that the agreement on Libya be supported by all, so as to overcome the grave divisions and violence afflicting the country. May the attention of the international community be unanimously directed to ending the atrocities which in those countries, as well as in Iraq, Libya, Yemen and sub-Saharan Africa, even now reap numerous victims, cause immense suffering and do not even spare the historical and cultural patrimony of entire peoples. My thoughts also turn to those affected by brutal acts of terrorism, particularly the recent massacres which took place in Egyptian airspace, in Beirut, Paris, Bamako and Tunis.

To our brothers and sisters who in many parts of the world are being persecuted for their faith, may the Child Jesus grant consolation and strength. They are our martyrs of today.

We also pray for peace and concord among the peoples of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi and South Sudan, that dialogue may lead to a strengthened common commitment to the building of civil societies animated by a sincere spirit of reconciliation and of mutual understanding.

May Christmas also bring true peace to Ukraine, offer comfort to those suffering from the effects of the conflict, and inspire willingness to carry out the agreements made to restore concord in the entire country.

May the joy of this day illumine the efforts of the Colombian people so that, inspired by hope, they may continue their commitment to working for the desired peace.

Where God is born, hope is born; and where hope is born, persons regain their dignity. Yet even today great numbers of men and woman are deprived of their human dignity and, like the child Jesus, suffer cold, poverty, and rejection. May our closeness today be felt by those who are most vulnerable, especially child soldiers, women who suffer violence, and the victims of human trafficking and the drug trade.

Nor may our encouragement be lacking to all those fleeing extreme poverty or war, travelling all too often in inhumane conditions and not infrequently at the risk of their lives. May God repay all those, both individuals and states, who generously work to provide assistance and welcome to the numerous migrants and refugees, helping them to build a dignified future for themselves and for their dear ones, and to be integrated in the societies which receive them.

On this festal day may the Lord grant renewed hope to all those who lack employment – and they are so many!; may he sustain the commitment of those with public responsibilities in political and economic life, that they may work to pursue the common good and to protect the dignity of every human life.

Where God is born, mercy flourishes. Mercy is the most precious gift which God gives us, especially during this Jubilee year in which we are called to discover that tender love of our heavenly Father for each of us. May the Lord enable prisoners in particular to experience his merciful love, which heals wounds and triumphs over evil.

Today, then, let us together rejoice in the day of our salvation. As we contemplate the Crib, let us gaze on the open arms of Jesus, which show us the merciful embrace of God, as we hear the cries of the Child who whispers to us: “for my brethren and companions’ sake, I will say: Peace be within you” (Ps 121[122]:8).

(Due to publishing deadlines we are not able to include the homily rerun in this weekend’s bulletin so we offer you these words from our Pope Francis)