



The Holy See

PASTORAL VISIT TO THE PARISH
OF SAINT MAXIMILIAN KOLBE IN ROME
HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

Third Sunday of Advent, 12 December 2010

[\(Video\)](#)

[Photo Gallery](#)

Dear Brothers and Sisters of the Parish of San Massimiliano Kolbe,

You are deeply living your personal and community commitment to follow the Lord. Advent is a strong invitation to everyone to let God come increasingly into our lives, our houses, our neighbourhoods and our communities in order to have light in the midst of the many shadows, in the numerous daily efforts.

Dear friends, I am very glad to be with you today to celebrate the Lord's Day, the Third Sunday of Advent, the Sunday of joy.

I cordially greet the Cardinal Vicar, the Auxiliary Bishop of the Sector, your Parish Priest, whom I thank for his words on behalf of you all, and the Parochial Vicar.

I greet all those who are active in the parish context: the catechists and the members of various groups including the Neocatechumenal Way. I deeply appreciate your decision to make room for Eucharistic adoration and I thank you for the prayers you say for me before the Most Blessed Sacrament.

I would like to extend my thoughts to all the inhabitants of the district, especially the elderly, the sick and those who are alone or in difficulty. I remember each and every one at this Mass.

I join you in admiring your new church and the parish buildings, and I wish to encourage you by my presence to bring ever better into being that Church of living stones which you yourselves are.

I know of the many important evangelization projects that you are carrying out. I urge all the faithful to make their own contribution to the edification of the community, in particular in the field of catechesis, the liturgy and charity — pillars of Christian life — in communion with the whole Diocese of Rome. No community can live as a cell isolated from the diocesan context; instead the community must be a living expression of the beauty of the Church which, under the guidance of the Bishop — and in the parish, under the guidance of the Parish Priest who acts in his place — journeys on in communion towards the Kingdom of God.

I address a special thought to families, accompanying them with the wish that they may totally fulfil their vocation to love, and with generosity and perseverance. Even when difficulties arise in conjugal life and in the relationship with their children, married couples must never cease to stay faithful to that fundamental “yes” which they said before God and to each other on their wedding day, remembering that faithfulness to one’s vocation demands courage, generosity and sacrifice.

Your community includes many families from Central and Southern Italy who have come in search of work and better standards of living. As time has passed the community has grown and has changed, to a certain extent, with the arrival of many people from the Eastern European countries and from many other countries.

On the basis of this practical situation in the parish, make an effort to grow constantly in communion with all: it is important to create opportunities for dialogue and to foster understanding among people from different cultures, backgrounds and social conditions.

Yet, above all, it is necessary to try to involve them in Christian life, through a pastoral care attentive to the true needs of each person. Here, as in every parish, it is necessary to start with those who are “close” in order to reach out to those who are “distant” so as to bring an evangelical presence to the milieus of life and work.

All must be able to find in the parish an adequate means of formation and must be able to experience that community dimension which is a fundamental characteristic of Christian life. In this way they will be encouraged to rediscover the beauty of following Christ and of belonging to his Church.

May you therefore be able to make a community with them all, united in listening to the Word of God and in the celebration of the sacraments and of the Eucharist in particular. In this regard the pastoral verification of the diocese that is under way, on the theme: “Sunday Eucharist and the witness of charity”, is a propitious opportunity to examine deeply and live better these two fundamental components of the life and mission of the Church and of every individual believer,

that is, the Sunday Eucharist and the practice of charity.

Gathered round the Eucharist, it is easier to feel that the mission of every Christian community is to take the message of God's love to all human beings. This is why it is important that the Eucharist always be at the heart of the faithful's life.

I would also like to address a special word of affection and friendship to you, dear children and young people who are listening to me, and to your peers who live in this Parish. The Church expects much of you, of your enthusiasm, of your capacity for looking ahead and of your desire for radicalism in life's decisions. May you feel you are real protagonists in the parish, putting your fresh energies and your whole life at the service of God and of the brethren.

Dear brothers and sisters, next to the invitation to rejoice, today's Liturgy, with the words of St James that we have heard, also asks us to be constant and patient in waiting for the Lord who comes and to be so together, as a community, avoiding complaints and criticism (*cf.* Jas 5:7-10).

In the Gospel we heard the question asked by John the Baptist who was in prison: John, who had proclaimed the coming of the Judge who would change the world, and now felt had that the world has remained the same. Thus he sends word to Jesus asking: "Are you 'He who is to come', or shall we look for another?". Is it you or should we expect another?

In the past two or three centuries many have asked: "But is it really you? Or must the world be changed in a more radical manner? Will you not do it?".

And a great tide of prophets, ideologists and dictators have come and said: "It is not him! He did not change the world! It is we!". And they created their empires, their dictatorships, their totalitarianism which was supposed to change the world. And they changed it, but in a destructive manner. Today we know that of these great promises nothing remained but a great void and great destruction. It was not they.

And thus we must see Christ again and ask Christ: "Is it you?" The Lord, in his own silent way, answers: "You see what I did, I did not start a bloody revolution, I did not change the world with force; but lit many I, which in the meantime form a pathway of light through the millenniums".

Let us start here in our Parish with St Maximilian Kolbe, who offered to die of hunger himself in order to save the father of a family. What a great light he became! How much light shone from this figure and encouraged others to give themselves, to be close to the suffering and the oppressed!

Let us think of Damien de Veuster who was a father to lepers, and who lived and died *with* and *for* lepers, and has thus brought light to this community.

Let us think of Mother Teresa, who gave so much light to people that, after a life without light, they died with a smile because they were touched by the light of God's love.

And thus we shall be able to continue and we shall see, as the Lord said in his answer to John, that it is not the violent revolution of the world, but rather the silent light of the truth, of the goodness of God that is the sign of his presence and gives us the certainty that we are loved to the end and are not forgotten, that we are not a product of chance but of a will to love.

Thus we may live, we may feel God's nearness. "God is close", says today's First Reading, he is near us but we are often distant. Let us draw near, let us move into the presence of his light, let us pray the Lord that through contact with him in prayer we ourselves will become light for others.

And this is precisely also the meaning of the parish church: to enter here, to enter into conversation, into contact with Jesus, with the Son of God, so that we ourselves may become one of the smallest lights that he has lit to carry his light into the world which feels it must be redeemed.

Our spirit must be open to this invitation and let us thus walk joyfully towards Christmas, like the Virgin Mary who awaited the Redeemer's birth in prayer, with intimate and joyful trepidation.

Amen!

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