



The Holy See

ADVENT MASS FOR THE STUDENTS
OF THE ROMAN STATE UNIVERSITIES

HOMILY OF JOHN PAUL II

St Peter's Basilica

Tuesday, 14 December 2004

1. "*Come, O Lord, the earth awaits you!*". The invocation we have just repeated ushers us appropriately into the atmosphere of Advent, a season of expectation and hope in which this annual liturgical celebration is taking place with you, dear university students. I am grateful to you for desiring to share with me every year the anxious waiting for the Lord in the mystery of the night of Bethlehem. Thank you, for as "dawn watchmen" you are prepared to be on the alert - today, in these weeks and throughout your life - to be ready to welcome the Lord who comes. I greet you all with affection: the academic community of the Roman universities and the university delegations from other European cities; the Vice Minister for Education, Universities and Research, as well as the other Authorities present; I greet the university chaplains and members of the university orchestra and choirs of Rome and Lazio. I thank in particular Prof. Ornaghi and the student who on your behalf have expressed cordial sentiments and fervent good wishes to me for Holy Christmas.

2. Dear university students, we are in the Year of the Eucharist and, in preparation for the World Youth Day, you are reflecting on the theme: "*The Eucharist and the truth about man*". The topic is a demanding one. Indeed, as we stand before the Eucharistic Mystery, we are impelled to ascertain the truth about our *faith*, our *hope* and our *charity*. It is impossible to go on being indifferent when Christ says: "*I am the living bread which came down from heaven*" (Jn 6: 51). His question immediately springs to mind: "Do you believe *that it is I*? Do you truly believe?". In the light of his words: "*If anyone eats of this bread, he will live for ever*" (*ibid.*), we cannot but question ourselves on the meaning and value of our daily lives. And then what can be said of the question about *true love* when we meditate on the Lord's words: "*the bread which I shall give is my flesh for the life of the world*" (*ibid.*)? Yes. *This bread*, the Eucharistic bread, contains the saving offering of the life that Christ sacrificed for the life of the world. Do we not then spontaneously wonder: "And is *my* 'flesh', that is, my humanity, my life, *for someone*? Is it full of love for God and charity for my neighbour? Or does it instead remain locked into the oppressive circle of selfishness?".

3. Dear university students, you are continuously seeking the truth. But it is impossible to succeed in finding out the truth about man by using merely the means that the various scientific disciplines offer. You know well that only through Christ's gaze can we discover the ultimate truth about the

human person, the truth about ourselves. And he, the Lord, comes to meet us in the Mystery of the Eucharist. Never cease to seek him, therefore, and in his eyes you will discover an attractive reflection of the goodness and beauty that he himself has poured into your hearts with the gift of his Spirit. May this mysterious reflection of his love be the light that always guides you on your way! This is the wish that as Holy Christmas approaches I offer to each one of you, dear Brothers and Sisters. May the Son of God who became man for our salvation give you the courage to seek the truth about yourselves in the light of his infinite love! Our Redeemer is now close: go forth to meet him! Amen. © Copyright 2004 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana

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