



The Holy See

FIRST VESPERS ON THE SOLEMNITY OF MARY, MOTHER OF GOD AND TE DEUM IN THANKSGIVING FOR THE PAST YEAR

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

Vatican Basilica

Sunday, 31 December 2017

[[Multimedia](#)]

“When the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son” (Gal 4:4). This celebration of Vespers breathes the atmosphere of the *fullness of time*. Not because we are at the last evening of the solar year, far from it; but because the faith teaches us to contemplate and feel that Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, has given fullness to worldly time and human history.

“Born of woman” (v. 4). The first to experience the meaning of the fullness given by the presence of Jesus was precisely the “woman” of whom he was “born”: the Mother of the Incarnate Son, *Theotokos*, Mother of God. The fullness of time flowed forth through her, so to speak: through her humble and faith-filled heart, through her flesh wholly permeated by the Holy Spirit.

From her the Church has acquired and constantly acquires this inner perception of fullness, which fosters a *sense of gratitude*, as a unique human response worthy of the immense Gift of God. A heartrending gratitude which, beginning from the contemplation of that Child swaddled and laid in a manger, extends to everything and to everyone, to the entire world. It is a “gratefulness” which reflects the Grace; it comes not from the ‘we’ but from him; it comes not from the ‘I’ but from God; and it engages the ‘I’ and the ‘we’.

In this atmosphere created by the Holy Spirit, we raise to God the *thanksgiving for the year that is coming to an end*, acknowledging that all good is his gift.

Even this moment of the year 2017, which God gave to us whole and healthy, we humans in many

ways have squandered and wounded with works of death, with lies and injustice. Wars are a flagrant sign of this recidivist and absurd pride. But so too are all the small and large offenses to life, to truth, to brotherhood, which cause manifold forms of human, social and environmental degradation.

We wish to and must assume our responsibility for everything before God, our brothers and sisters and creation.

But this evening Jesus' grace and his reflection in Mary prevail. And therefore gratitude prevails, the gratitude that, as Bishop of Rome, I feel in my heart, thinking of the people who live with open hearts in this city.

I feel a sense of fondness and gratitude for all those people who each day *contribute, with small but valuable concrete gestures, to the good of Rome*: they try as best they can to fulfil their duty; they move through the traffic with discernment and prudence, respecting public places and signaling the things that do not work; they are attentive to people who are elderly or in difficulty, and so on. In these and a thousand other ways they concretely express *love for the city*. Without speeches, without publicity, but with a style of *civic education practiced in daily life*. And in this way they quietly cooperate for the common good.

Likewise I feel great esteem for the parents, teachers and all educators who, with this same manner, try to form children and young people in civic awareness, in an ethics of responsibility, educating them to *feel part of, to take care of, to take an interest in* the reality that surrounds them.

These people, even if they do not make the news, are the majority of the people who live in Rome. And among them many find themselves in conditions of economic difficulty; and yet they do not complain about it, nor do they harbour resentment and rancour, but they strive each day to do their part to make things a little better.

Today, in giving thanks to God, I invite you to also express appreciation for all these *artisans of the common good*, who love their city not only with words but with deeds.