



Homily of his Holiness Pope Francis: first vespers on the solemnity of Mary, Mother of God and Te Deum in Thanksgiving for the past year

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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

Thursday, 31 December 2015

[Multimedia]

Our gathering together to give praise to the Lord at the end of the year is full of significance!

On many occasions the Church feels the joy and the duty to raise her song to God with these words of praise, words which have accompanied her on this earthly pilgrimage since the fourth century. It is the joy of thanksgiving that emanates almost spontaneously from our prayer, by recognizing the loving presence of God throughout the course of our history. As often happens, however, we feel that, for prayer, one voice alone is not enough. It needs to be reinforced with the company of all the People of God, who in unison make their song of thanksgiving heard. This is why in the *Te Deum* we ask the Angels, the Prophets and all of creation for their help in giving praise to the Lord. In this hymn we trace the history of salvation where, through God's mysterious plan, there is also a place for the summation of the various events in the our lives this past year.

In this Jubilee Year there is a special resonance in the final words of the Church's hymn: "Let Thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us, for we have hoped in Thee". The accompaniment of mercy is light so as to better understand what we have experienced, and the hope which accompanies us at the beginning of a new year.

Retracing the days of the past year may happen either by remembering facts and events that bring back moments of joy and sorrow, or by seeking to understand whether we have perceived the presence of God who renews and sustains all things with his help. We are called upon to ascertain whether the course of world events has been carried out according to God's will, or whether we have primarily heeded the plans of man, often rife with private interests, an insatiable thirst for power, and gratuitous violence.

Today, however, our eyes need to be focused in a particular way on the signs that God has conveyed to us, so as to physically touch the strength of his merciful love. We cannot forget that many days have been marked by violence, death, the unspeakable suffering of many innocent people, of refugees forced to leave their homeland, by men, women and children without stable shelter, food and sustenance. Yet, many great gestures of goodness, love and solidarity have filled the days of this year, even if they did not become television news. Good things do not make headlines. These signs of love cannot and must not be obscured by the contempt of evil. Goodness always wins, even if in certain moments it seems weaker and obscure.

Our city of Rome is not unfamiliar with this worldwide condition. With all my heart I would like to invite all of its inhabitants to move beyond the difficulties of the present time. May the commitment to recover the fundamental values of service, honesty and solidarity allow the serious uncertainties that have dominated the stage this year to be overcome; such uncertainties are symptoms of a poor sense of dedication to the common good. May a positive supply of Christian witness never be lacking, so as to allow Rome, in line with its history, and with the maternal intercession of Mary, *Salus Populi Romani*, to be a privileged exponent of faith, welcome, fraternity and peace.

"You are God: we praise you.... In you, Lord, is our hope: And we shall never hope in vain".