

(English translation)

25 December 1973

What Christmas is for Me

Christmas, feast of the birth of Jesus, is for me the reply of God and the Church to a need of the soul: to hear repeated to me every year, through the commemoration of that fact so sweet, so sublime, so simple and so deep, that God loves me.

Yes, if in my existence, I am able to fulfil my deepest aspirations, it is only because God has looked also upon me, as he has upon everyone, and has become man to give me the laws of life that, like light on the road, help me walk safely towards our common destiny.

But Christmas for me is not just a commemoration, however meaningful. It is a spur for me to work to restore the presence of Christ in the midst of the society in which I live. He is there where two or more are united in his name (see *Mt* 18:20), like an everyday spiritual Christmas, in homes, in factories, in schools, in public buildings...

This day of Christmas, furthermore, opens my heart to the whole of humanity. Its warmth goes beyond the Christian world and seems to invade every land, a sign that that Baby came for everyone. In fact it is his plan: that all may be one (see *Jn* 17:21).

And every Christmas then I always ask myself: 'How many more Christmases will I see in my life?' This question, which has no answer, helps me to live every year as if it were the last with a greater awareness of my own Christmas day, the 'dies natalis', the day which will signal for me the beginning of the life that never dies.