

Christmas 1999

The newness of the Spirit

All the Christmases of our life have been special, because Christmas is special.

Yet it is not uncommon that on that day, in people's hearts a flame is kindled that cannot easily be analysed, but which is linked to that very day, to Christmas.

It is the effect of an unforeseen and unexpected sense of security: that of being loved.

Yes, because Christmas is the strongest and clearest witness to the fact that Someone loves us, since only love from up above, from heaven, has "forced" him to come and dwell among us.

But this year Christmas is different because on Christmas eve that flame will not die out. It will continue to burn for a whole year, a year dedicated to reminding us, all year long, of that divine birth.

We might wonder how we can live this time of grace, love and light.

How can we prepare ourselves?

Standing before the Holy Door, just a few days before the start of the Great Jubilee, the words of Pope John Paul II resonate in our hearts: "The Church cannot prepare for the 2,000th anniversary of the birth of Christ in any other way than in the Holy Spirit. What was accomplished in the "fullness of time" by the power of the Holy Spirit, that is, the birth of Jesus, can only through the Spirit's power now emerge from the memory of the Church".¹

Therefore in these few days it is important for us to rediscover the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is the divine Person who speaks of love, promises unity and ensures newness.

We want to ask and obtain all of these from the Holy Spirit in front of the Holy Door that will soon open: love and newness; above all, newness.

Humanity, every human being, needs the newness of the Holy Spirit. They need it to discover God who is active in the world: God who guides their personal life, the life of the community around them, of the people they belong to and the history of which they are part. Everyone needs newness, their own newness, in order to renew their love for God once more, and to draw strength from this new love to build, with God, a new world, the one dreamed of by the Child Jesus.

The Holy Spirit can do this, by putting order, first of all, in the hearts of men and women, with the love that will raise them up to the heights they are destined for as children of God.

But it will also bring order into everything that concerns them, in the many fields where they are present and active: in their families, at work, in the most varied areas of society.

For we must remember that, at Christmas, we not only witness a heavenly and divine event, but the birth of a Man, however special, sublime and eternal he may be. This Man longs to give humanity a new form: to build the earthly city according to the image of the heavenly city from which he came down.

This is what we expect from Christmas, from this coming Christmas 1999, and from the continuous Christmas of the year 2,000: a great gift from God to the world, from the Holy Spirit to our hearts, so that the incarnation of the Son of God may continue in us and the world be inundated with the divine and imbued by the Holy Spirit with the new law: that of heaven.

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NOTE: published by Città Nuova n. 23 in 1999, as the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 approached, with the opening of the Holy Door. The Jubilee was prepared in the preceding three years by deepening the reality of the Father, the Son and, lastly, of the Holy Spirit.

¹Cf. Encyclical Letter *Dominum et vivificantem* cited in the *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, n. 44