

*Courtesy translation*

*Vatican City, December 25<sup>th</sup> 2021*

*Nativity of the Lord*

Dear Knights and Dames,

With our hearts turned towards the intimate and beloved image of the Nativity, I would like to address to all of you and your families my best wishes for Christmas.

The liturgy of the Holy Night echoes the angel's announcement to the shepherds: "*I announce great joy to you [...]: today the Savior, who is Christ the Lord, was born for you*"; the joy that the Lord gives us with his birth runs through all times and we can experience it tonight as well since it provides us with lots of reasons for feeling great consolation and hope.

While we adore the Savior's birth in a humble stable, we experience his meekness, too.

During this night, illuminated by Christ's light, we prepare to contemplate Christ in his mystery of Salvation: the log in the manger that today welcomes the humble Child prefigures for all of us the Salvation that will emerge from the wood of the cross during the Holy Week.

It seems that there is no place for pain on the day of the Lord's Birth, which is the day that true Life has arisen in the world. However, despite the great joy of Christmas, the evangelist does not forget to remind us that "*there was no place for them at the hotel*": how many times have we rejected the Lord and his closeness!

As Benedict XVI recalled, "*humanity, that is so busy, needs all the space and all the time for its own things that nothing has been left for the others, the poorest and for God*".

Following the vigilant and joyful example of the shepherds, we must strive to welcome our neighbors in our lives and consequently God himself. Christ, assuming

the fragility of the human condition, teaches us once again that we have to care about the poorest. Indeed, we could experience the real encounter with Christ only if we help those in need!

Today, dear brothers and sisters, let us turn our gaze to Mary, Mother of the Lord, the first who welcomed the incarnate Son of God into her life, so that we too could be his disciples and authentic witnesses of his Word.

With my fatherly blessing, I convey to you and your loved ones my best wishes for a Holy Christmas.

Card. Renato Raffaele Martino