



year that the Pope is dedicating to something important for everyone: hope. Hope.

"Hope does not disappoint." The document with which the Pope convoked the Jubilee year begins with those words from St. Paul. Hope does not disappoint.

But what is this hope? Many of our hopes in this world never come to fulfillment. But the hope that does not disappoint, as we well know, is the hope — as St. Paul writes in his letter to the Colossians — the hope laid up for us in Heaven (cf. Col 1:5).

But this is not hope in Heaven as something far-off, no, Heaven is "God with us," the strength of God, the love of God. This is the security of our hope. It is indeed a hope that does not disappoint. We can disappoint God, but God never disappoints us.

We see now, at Christmastime, that God becomes a child for us, gives Himself to us, and transforms — in our lives too, in a way — the cold, dark, and poverty of Bethlehem into the great riches of God's love for us, his own gift of self to us, to each one of us.

And so Christmas is always a reason for joy, a feast. And at the same time, considering that many people do not yet have the hope the Lord places in us. And so it moves us to apostolic zeal, not because we are better, but because we have received, with God's grace, faith and hope also in order to share them.

So, seeing the world as it is — with so many difficulties, wars, poverty, dissension — but at the same time, with so many good people... We think about this frequently: there are so many good people. But all of us can collaborate to make this goodness

flourish more, looking particularly toward the newborn child, toward the Virgin Mary and St. Joseph. God's marvellous gift of self is for each one of us.

But we need faith. Faith in the Lord, assurance in his love. Now I remember a prayer that St. Josemaría often said, and taught us to say, speaking to the Lord: increase our faith, hope, and charity (love).

Because we need God's gift to have hope, and to be able to give it to others, together with affection, dedication, and service, which are what make us happy. We are well aware, as St. Josemaría said: "To be happy, what you need is not an easy life but a heart in love" (*Furrow*, no. 795). Being in love means giving oneself, dedicating oneself. It is not selfishness: on the contrary.

Contemplating the mystery of God giving Himself to us so completely,

Christmas is also an opportunity to renew our desire to serve, to give ourselves, which are what make us happy, which are what make us joyful and efficacious.

I pray for all of you and naturally I ask you to pray for my intentions, for all the work that is being done, also now for the Statutes of the Work, for so many apostolic intentions around the world, and above all that we pray a lot, always, for the Pope: for his intentions, for the whole Church.

Merry Christmas again. With my blessing — and trusting a lot in all your prayers, including for me and my intentions — may God bless you.

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