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The Pope's "Three Wishes" for Christmas

On December 7, Benedict XVI lit the world's largest Christmas tree, and expressed "three wishes" for this Christmas. With link to homily at Midnight Mass in St. Peter's

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"Before lighting the tree," he said, "I would like to express three wishes. This Christmas tree is formed on the slopes of Mt. Ingino at whose summit

is found the basilica of Gubbio's patron saint, St. Ubaldo. When we look at it our eyes are lifted up, raised toward the sky, toward the world of God."

"My first wish, therefore, is that our gaze, that of our minds and our hearts, not rest only on the horizon of this world, on its material things, but that it in some way, like this tree that tends upward, be directed toward God. God never forgets us but He also asks that we don't forget Him.

"The Gospel recounts that, on the holy night of Christ's birth, a light enveloped the shepherds, announcing a great joy to them: the birth of Jesus, the one who brings us light, or better, the One who is the true light that illuminates all. The great tree that I will light up shortly overlooks the city of Gubbio and will

illuminate the darkness of the night with its light.

"My second wish is that we recall that we also need a light to illumine the path of our lives and to give us hope, especially in this time in which we feel so greatly the weight of difficulties, of problems, of suffering, and it seems that we are enshrouded in a veil of darkness. But what light can truly illuminate our hearts and give us a firm and sure hope? It is the Child whom we contemplate on Christmas, in a poor and humble manger, because He is the Lord who draws near to each of us and asks that we receive Him anew in our lives, asks us to want Him, to trust in Him, to feel His presence, that He is accompanying us, sustaining us, and helping us.

"But this great tree is formed of many lights. My final wish is that each of us contribute something of

that light to the spheres in which we live: our families, our jobs, our neighborhoods, towns, and cities. That each of us be a light for those who are at our sides; that we leave aside the selfishness that, so often, closes our hearts and leads us to think only of ourselves; that we may pay greater attention to others, that we may love them more. Any small gesture of goodness is like one of the lights of this great tree: together with other lights it illuminates the darkness of the night, even of the darkest night."

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