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**“As an apostle you have a great and beautiful task.”**

As an apostle you have a great and beautiful task. You find yourself at the place where grace and the freedom of each soul meet. You are also present at that most solemn occasion in the life of some men: their encounter with Christ! (Furrow, 219)

4 January

At Christmas our thoughts turn to the different events and circumstances surrounding the birth of the Son of God. As we contemplate the stable in Bethlehem or the home of the holy family in Nazareth, Mary, Joseph and the child Jesus occupy a special place in our hearts. What does the simple, admirable life of the holy family tell us? What can we learn from it?

I would like particularly to comment on one of the many considerations that we might make on this theme. As we read in holy Scripture, the birth of Jesus means the beginning of the fullness of time. It was the moment God chose to show the extent of his love for men, by giving us his own Son. And God's will is fulfilled in the simplest, most ordinary of circumstances: a woman who gives birth, a family, a home. The power of God and his splendour come to us through a human reality to which they are joined. Since that

moment Christians have known that, with God's grace, they can and should sanctify everything that is good in their human lives. There is no human situation, no matter how trivial and ordinary it may seem, which cannot be a meeting-place with Christ and a step forward on our journey toward the kingdom of heaven.

It is only natural that the Church rejoices as it contemplates the modest home of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. (Christ is passing by, 22)