



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE
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Celebration of first Vespers of the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, and Te Deum of thanksgiving for the past year

This afternoon, in the Vatican Basilica, the Holy Father Francis presided over first Vespers of the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, followed by the singing of the traditional *Te Deum* hymn of thanksgiving at the conclusion of the civil year. At the end of the celebration, Pope Francis paid a visit to the Nativity scene in Saint Peter's Square.

The following is the homily delivered by the Pope during the celebration:

Homily of the Holy Father

This is the time of thanksgiving, and we have the joy of experiencing it by celebrating the Holy Mother of God. She, who keeps the mystery of Jesus in her heart, also teaches us to read the signs of the times in the light of this mystery.

The year that is coming to a close has been a demanding year for the city of Rome. The citizens, pilgrims, tourists and all those passing through have experienced the typical phase that precedes a Jubilee, with the proliferation of building sites, large and small. This evening is the moment of a wise reflection, to consider that all this work, besides the value it has in itself, has had a *meaning* that corresponds to the vocation proper to Rome, her universal vocation. In the light of the word of God we have just heard, this vocation could be expressed thus: *Rome is called to welcome everyone, so that all may recognize themselves as children of God and brothers and sisters to each other.*

Therefore, at this time we wish to raise our thanks to the Lord because He has allowed us to work, and to work a lot, and above all because He has given us to do so with this great meaning, with this broad horizon that is *the hope of fraternity.*

The Jubilee motto, "Pilgrims of hope", is rich in meanings, depending on the different possible perspectives, which are like just as many "roads" of pilgrimage. And one of these great roads of hope on which to walk is fraternity: it is the road I proposed in the Encyclical *Fratelli tutti*. Yes, the hope of the world resides in fraternity! It is good to think that our city, in recent months, has become a worksite for this purpose, with this overall meaning: preparing to welcome men and women from all over the world, Catholics and Christians of other denominations, believers of every religion, seekers of truth, freedom, justice and peace, all pilgrims of hope and fraternity.

But we must ask ourselves: does this perspective *have a foundation*? Is the hope of a fraternal humanity merely a rhetorical slogan, or does it have a "rocky" foundation on which something stable and lasting can be built?

The answer is given to us by the Holy Mother of God, by *showing Jesus to us*. Hope in a fraternal world is not an ideology, it is not an economic system, it is not technological progress. The hope of a fraternal world is Him, *the Son incarnate*, sent by the Father so that we may all become what we are, namely *children of the Father in heaven*, and therefore *brothers and sisters among ourselves*.

And so, as we gratefully admire the results of the work carried out in the city – let us give thanks for the work of the many, many men and women who have done it, and let us thank the Lord Mayor for working to lead the city forward – let us be aware of what the decisive building site, the worksite that involves every one of us, is: this worksite is the one in which, every day, I will allow God to change in me what is not worthy of a son – to change! – that which is not humane; and in which I will strive, every day, to live as a brother and sister to my neighbour.

May our Holy Mother help us walk together, as pilgrims of hope, on the path of fraternity. May the Lord bless us, all of us; may He forgive our sins and give us the strength to go on in our pilgrimage next year. Thank you.
