



# The Holy See

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## TE DEUM AND CELEBRATION OF FIRST VESPERS OF THE SOLEMNITY OF MARY, MOTHER OF GOD

### *HOMILY OF POPE FRANCIS*

*Vatican Basilica*

*Tuesday, 31 December 2013*

[Video](#)

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The Apostle John describes the present time in a precise way: “It is the last hour” (1 Jn 2:18). This statement — which recurs in the Mass of 31 December — means that with God’s coming into history we are already in the “last” times, after which the final phase will be of the second and definitive Coming of Christ. Of course here we are speaking about the *quality* of time, not about *quantity*. With Jesus the “fullness” of the time, the fullness of meaning and the fullness of salvation has come. And there will be no new revelation but rather the full manifestation of what Jesus has already revealed. In this sense we are at the “last hour”; each and every moment of our lives is not temporary, it is permanent, and our every action is charged with eternity. In fact, the response we give today to God, who loves us in Jesus Christ, bears upon our future.

The biblical and Christian vision of time and history is not cyclical but linear: it is a journey that moves toward completion. A year which has passed, then, does not lead us to a reality which ends but to a reality which is being fulfilled, it is a further step toward the destination that awaits us: a destination of hope and a destination of happiness, for we shall encounter God, who is the reason for our hope and the source of our happiness.

As 2013 draws to a close, we gather up, as in a basket, the days, weeks and months we have lived in order to offer them all to the Lord. And let us courageously ask ourselves: how have we lived the time which He has given us? Have we used it primarily for ourselves, for our own

interests, or have we also sought to spend it on others? How much time have we reserved for being with God, in prayer, in silence, in adoration?

And then we think, we citizens of Rome, we think about this City of Rome. What happened this year? What is happening, and what will happen? What is the quality of life in this City? It depends on all of us! What is the quality of our “citizenship”? This year, have we contributed in our own “small” way to making it more liveable, orderly, welcoming? In effect, the face of a city is like a mosaic whose tesserae are all those who live there. Certainly, those who are invested with authority have greater responsibility, but each one of us is co-responsible, for better or for worse.

Rome is a city of unique beauty. Its spiritual and cultural heritage is extraordinary. Yet even in Rome there are so many people marked by material and moral poverty, poor, unhappy, suffering people who challenge the conscience of every citizen. Perhaps in Rome we feel this contrast more strongly because of the contrast between the majestic scene and wealth of artistic beauty, and the social unrest of those who are struggling the most. Rome is a city full of tourists, but also full of refugees. Rome is full of people who work, but also of people who cannot find work or perform underpaid and sometimes undignified work, and everyone has the right to be treated equally with an attitude of acceptance and fairness, because everyone is a bearer of human dignity.

It is the last day of the year. What shall we do, how shall we act in the coming year in order to make our City a little better? In the new year, Rome will have an even more beautiful face if it is richer in humanity, more hospitable and welcoming; if we are all considerate and generous to those in difficulty; if we cooperate with a constructive and caring spirit for the good of all. Rome in the new year will be better if people do not observe it as “from afar”, on a postcard, if they do not only watch life pass by “from the balcony” without becoming involved in the many human problems, in the problems of men and women, who in the end... and from the beginning, whether we like it or not, are our brothers and sisters. From this perspective, the Church of Rome feels committed to making its own contribution to the life and future of the City — it is its duty! It feels committed and inspired by the leaven of the Gospel to be a sign and instrument of God’s mercy.

This evening let us conclude the Year of the Lord 2013 by giving thanks and also by asking for forgiveness. The two together: giving thanks and asking for forgiveness. Let us give thanks for all the blessings which God has bestowed on us, especially for his patience and his faithfulness, which are manifest over the course of time, but in a singular way in the fullness of time, when “God sent forth his Son, born of woman” (Gal 4:4). May the Mother of God, in whose name tomorrow we begin a new phase of our earthly pilgrimage, teach us to welcome God made man, so that every year, every month, every day may be filled with his eternal Love. So be it!

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