

INCONTRO CON LA COMUNITÀ DEI FILIPPINI RESIDENTI IN ROMA 01 – 12 - 2002

Alle ore 10 di oggi, prima domenica di Avvento, il Papa incontra, nell'Aula Paolo VI in Vaticano, la Comunità cattolica filippina residente a Roma.

Nel corso della Santa Messa, dopo la proclamazione del Vangelo, Giovanni Paolo II pronuncia la seguente omelia:

OMELIA DEL SANTO PADRE

1. *"Tu, Signore, tu sei nostro Padre, da sempre ti chiami nostro redentore" (Is 63,16)*. All'inizio dell'Avvento, la Liturgia ci invita a riassaporare il consolante messaggio della paternità di Dio. Le parole tratte dal Libro del profeta Isaia, e poc'anzi ascoltate, ci introducono nel nucleo centrale della predicazione di Gesù. Alla precisa richiesta dei discepoli: *"Signore, insegnaci a pregare"*, Egli risponde incoraggiandoli a rivolgersi a Dio col dolce nome di *"Padre"* (cfr Lc 11,1-4).

Sì, Dio è nostro Padre! Si prende cura di noi, perché siamo opera delle sue mani. E' sempre pronto a perdonare i peccatori pentiti, e ad accogliere con tenerezza quanti confidano nella sua infinita misericordia (cfr Is 64,4).

Carissimi Fratelli e Sorelle della Cappellania cattolica filippina a Roma! Sono lieto di condividere con voi quest'annuncio consolante, mentre intraprendiamo il cammino dell'Avvento. Avrei voluto farvi visita il 24 febbraio scorso e celebrare l'Eucaristia nella Basilica di Santa Pudenziana al Viminale. Non è stato possibile ed è per questo che oggi vi accolgo con grande cordialità qui, in Vaticano, riprendendo così i miei consueti incontri con le parrocchie e le comunità della nostra Diocesi.

2. With great affection I greet you and, through you, the many thousands of Filipino men and women living in Rome and in other cities throughout Italy. I greet the Cardinal Vicar and the Auxiliary Bishop for the central zone, who are constantly concerned for your pastoral care. I also greet your fellow countryman, Cardinal José Sanchez, Prefect emeritus of the Congregation for the Clergy, who honors us by his presence here today.

I likewise respectfully acknowledge the presence of their Excellencies, the Ambassadors of the Philippines to the Holy See and to the Republic of Italy, together with other Representatives of the Filipino community.

My cordial greeting also goes to the priests, to the men and women Religious and to the lay faithful who in various ways serve your large and lively community. In a special way I greet your hard-working Chaplain, Father Alberto Maria Guevara. I thank him for his kind words at the beginning of this celebration and his introduction to the many activities taking place at the Basilica of Santa Pudenziana, which was entrusted in 1991 to the *Sentro Pilipino*. Just a few months ago he took over the rich legacy of pastoral care left behind by the much-loved Father Remo Bati after ten years of generous and faithful service to the community. I also thank Mr Exequiel Garcia and young Mark Angelo who spoke on behalf of all of you.

The Church's concern for the Filipino faithful can also be seen in thirty-nine pastoral centers located throughout the City where you can foster your own noble Christian traditions and give them new life, thanks to the liturgical and apostolic services offered there.

3. Dear Brothers and Sisters, hold fast to the rich cultural and religious heritage that is an integral part of your identity. Many of you have had the chance to find employment here in Italy and have

attained a standard of living that enables you to help your family members at home. For others, however – and I hope that they are few – your status as immigrants has brought you serious problems, including loneliness, the separation of families, the loss of the values handed down from the past and at times even the loss of your faith.

I would like to renew to all of you, and in particular to the many women present here, the words of encouragement which we heard in today's Liturgy: Do not lose heart! We must not grow weak in faith, for the Lord is near. The fact that you are immigrants makes you all the more dear to Jesus who, as we recall during Advent, came on earth to save us.

Continue, then, with trust and determination, along the path of faith and solidarity so well expressed in the motto mentioned by your Chaplain, which calls you to "communion", "witness" and "the proclamation of the Gospel". The witness of an authentically Christian life will keep you united among yourselves and will continue to win you the respect and help of others. I ask those who employ you to welcome you and love you as cherished brothers and sisters in Christ. All of us must work together to build the civilization of love.

4. "*Vegliate... vigilate*". Questa esortazione, che Gesù ci rivolge nel Vangelo (cfr *Mc* 13,33.53), è il richiamo fondamentale del tempo di Avvento: vigilare nell'attesa del Messia. Rimaniamo desti, carissimi Fratelli e Sorelle, per essere pronti ad incontrare il Salvatore, che viene a rivelarci il volto del Padre celeste.

Maria, l'umile vergine di Nazareth, eletta da Dio per diventare la Madre del Redentore, renda fruttuosa la nostra orante e vigile attesa del Redentore. Amen!