

Christmas Message from Archbishop Conti 2009

On the second Sunday of Advent we read in Saint Paul's letter to the Philippians his greeting to them: "I pray with joy" he said, "remembering how you have helped to spread the Good News from the day you first heard it right up to the present". Living the Christian life in an increasingly pagan society is a way in which the Gospel continues to be proclaimed. I make Saint Paul's prayer my own: "That your love for each other may increase more and more and never stop improving your knowledge and deepening your perception so that you can always recognise what is best. This will help you to become pure and blameless and prepare you for the day of Christ". (*Phil. 1 vv 3, 9/10*).

What is clear is that our preparation in Advent is not simply for Christmas, but for Christ's second coming, which is already underway. Each Christmas rekindles our fervent hope that "all mankind shall see the salvation of God" (*Lk. 3: 6*). If proclaiming the Gospel in today's world is living the Gospel in it, then our living must imitate it. Nowhere is the Gospel more tender and appealing than at the birth of Christ. Nor is His example of humility more telling than in this that He who is the Son of God put aside His glory and came among us as a child. The answer to so many of today's problems is in simplicity of life, in forbearance, and in a child-like trust manifested in prayer. We recall Jesus' words: "Truly I tell you: unless you turn round and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself and becomes like this little child will be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (*Matt. 18 3/4*). The little child referred to was the one He had placed in the midst of His disciples. Christmas, however, in a sense places the Christ child in our midst, and in bending low to greet Him we learn the lesson of His humility. May the joy of Christ remain with you throughout the year.