

# **Amid frenetic holiday preparations, don't forget Christ, pope says**

VATICAN CITY – In the hectic days before Christmas as people get ready for the holidays, may no one forget to prepare internally for the coming of Christ, Pope Benedict XVI said.

He asked that people dedicate the same kind of energy and care they pour into making their homes and neighborhoods more beautiful for the holidays into preparing their hearts for meeting Christ and making their lives pure and holy.

With just a few days left before Christmas, the pope dedicated his weekly general audience to the importance of the mystery of Christ's birth and the tradition of the Nativity scene.

He told about 3,000 pilgrims gathered in the Vatican's Paul VI audience hall Dec. 22 to not be caught unprepared, "busy only with making things on the outside more beautiful."

"Let's purify our consciences and our lives from that which is contrary to this coming," he said.

The pontiff asked those in attendance to cultivate "thoughts, words, behaviors and actions encouraging us to carry out the good and contribute toward bringing about peace and justice for everyone in this world."

The traditional Nativity scene, he said, is "an eloquent sign of our expectation of the Lord who comes" to dwell among humanity and is a show of thanks that "he decided to share our human condition, in poverty and simplicity."

The tradition of setting up a Christmas crib, which is still very much alive, he said, should also be rediscovered in homes, at work and at "gathering places."

"This genuine testimony of Christian faith can still today offer all people of goodwill a suggestive icon of God the father's infinite love for all of us."

“May the hearts of children and adults alike still be amazed” by the mystery of Jesus’ birth, Pope Benedict said, as he offered everyone his Christmas greetings.

“Amid all the frenetic activity of our lives, may this time grant us a bit of calm and joy and let us experience firsthand the goodness of our God who became a child in order to save us and give new courage and new light to our journey,” he said.