

# Pope prays for families, especially those in difficulty

VATICAN CITY – Christmas celebrations underscore the importance of the family in people's lives, but for many it also is a time when wounds caused by one's family become more painful, Pope Benedict XVI said.

Reciting the Angelus Dec. 28, the feast of the Holy Family, Pope Benedict prayed for families in difficulty and for family members who are sick or out of work.

"Christmas is the family celebration par excellence," the pope told visitors in St. Peter's Square. "This is demonstrated by many traditions and social customs, especially gathering together as a family to share festive meals and exchange best wishes and gifts."

But, he said, it also is a time when "the discomfort and pain caused by certain family wounds are amplified."

The pope prayed that all Christian families would model their relationships on those of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, working together, trusting in God and taking care of one another.

Speaking in Spanish, he sent his best wishes to people gathered in Madrid, Spain, "to pray for the family and to commit themselves to working on its behalf with strength and hope."

"The family certainly is a grace of God, which allows us to see who he is: love," Pope Benedict said.

"Dear families, do not let your love, your openness to life and the incomparable bonds that unite your home diminish," he said. "Constantly ask the Lord for this; pray together so that your plans may be enlightened by faith and strengthened by divine grace."

The pope said he is close to all the world's families, "praying to the Lord especially

for those in every family who have greater need for health, work, comfort and companionship.”

“We entrust to the Lord every family, especially those most tried by the difficulties of life and by the wounds of misunderstanding and division,” he said.

He also asked people to pray for the success of the Sixth World Meeting of Families, which will take place in Mexico City Jan. 14-18. The Pontifical Council for the Family is organizing the event.

Mexican church and government leaders had invited Pope Benedict to Mexico to preside over the celebration, but his doctors advised against the trip because of the city’s high altitude, said Cardinal Ennio Antonelli, president of the council.