



December 25, 2007

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Today is the birthday of hope! Yes, Jesus Christ, the Eternal Son of God, Who took flesh in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary and was born among us on this day for our salvation: He is the very source of our hope. Indeed, as Pope Benedict XVI reminded us at the very beginning of this new church year, hope is ...“ ‘anchored’ in Christ, God made man, the rock of our salvation” (*Homily, First Vespers, First Sunday of Advent, December 1, 2007*).

The Lord Jesus “never ceases to knock at our door like a humble pilgrim in search of hospitality” (*Ibid*). So, on this Christmas Day, the Infant Savior comes to each one of us, like a humble pilgrim, and knocks at the door of our heart, seeking to make His home within us and be for us our true and enduring hope as we continue to journey towards the eternal home which He has prepared for us.

Today, then, and on all the days that follow, through prayer and the reception of the sacraments, especially Penance and the Holy Eucharist, let us open our hearts in welcome to this Divine Humble Pilgrim, to the Lord Jesus Christ. By reaching out with compassion and loving care, let us give Him hospitality as He comes to us disguised in the hungry, the homeless, the ill, the imprisoned and the immigrant. Because He is our true hope and gives us the power to be living heralds of hope, let us bring Him to our families, our places of work, our neighborhoods and our schools. Moreover, let us entrust our men and women in the armed forces, especially those serving in Iraq and Afghanistan, to the Christ Child, for He is their hope too.

Yes, today is the birthday of hope, of Christ the Messiah and Lord. In hope we are saved. Let us then live, today and every day, in joyful hope, until we see the Infant Savior, not in the stable at Bethlehem, but face to face in the eternal glory of heaven.

I am remembering each of you in prayer, especially in the Holy Masses which I celebrate on Christmas and throughout the Christmas season, asking the Divine Humble Pilgrim, the Lord Jesus, to bless you and those you love with the fullness of His hope!

Faithfully in Christ,

+ Paul S. Loverde

Most Reverend Paul S. Loverde
Bishop of Arlington