

APOSTOLIC VISIT
OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE CZECH REPUBLIC
(SEPTEMBER 26-28, 2009)

VISIT TO THE "HOLY INFANT OF PRAGUE"

GREETING BY THE HOLY FATHER

*Church of Our Lady Victorious, Prague
Saturday, 26 September 2009*

*Dear Cardinals,
Your Excellencies,
Dear Brothers and Sisters,
Dear Children,*

I greet all of you warmly and I want you to know what joy it gives me to visit this Church, dedicated to Our Lady of Victory, where the faithful venerate the statue of the Infant Jesus, known throughout the world as the “Holy Infant of Prague”. I thank Archbishop Jan Graubner, President of the Episcopal Conference, for his words of welcome spoken on behalf of all the Bishops. I offer respectful greetings to the Mayor and to the other civil and religious authorities present at this gathering. I greet you, dear families, who have come in such large numbers to be here with me.

The image of the Child Jesus calls to mind the mystery of the Incarnation, of the all-powerful God who became man and who lived for thirty years in the lowly family of Nazareth, entrusted by Providence to the watchful care of Mary and Joseph. My thoughts turn to your own families and to all the families in the world, in their joys and difficulties. Our reflections should lead us to prayer, as we call upon the Child Jesus for the gift of unity and harmony for all families. We think especially of young families who have to work so hard to offer their children security and a decent future. We pray for families in difficulty, struggling with illness and suffering, for those in crisis, divided or torn apart by strife or infidelity. We entrust them all to the Holy Infant of Prague, knowing how important their stability and harmony is for the true progress of society and for the future of humanity.

The figure of the Child Jesus, the tender infant, brings home to us God’s closeness and his love. We come to understand how precious we are in his eyes, because it is through him that we in our turn have become children of God. Every human being is a child of God and therefore our brother or sister, to be welcomed and respected. May our society grasp this truth! Every human person would then be appreciated not for what he has, but for who he is, since in the face of every human being, without distinction of race or culture, God’s image shines forth.

This is especially true of children. In the Holy Infant of Prague we contemplate the beauty of childhood and the fondness that Jesus Christ has always shown for little ones, as we read in the Gospel (cf. *Mk* 10:13-16). Yet how many children are neither loved, nor welcomed nor respected! How many of them suffer violence and every kind of exploitation by the unscrupulous! May children always be accorded the respect and attention that are due to them: they are the future and the hope of humanity!

Dear children, I now want to say a special word to you and to your families. You have come here in large numbers to meet me, and for this I thank you most warmly. You are greatly loved by the Child Jesus, and you should return his love by following his example: be obedient, good and kind. Learn to be, like him, a source of joy to your parents. Be true friends of Jesus, and always turn to him in trust. Pray to him for yourselves, for your parents, relations, teachers and friends, and pray also for me. Thank you once again for your welcome. I bless you from my heart and I invoke upon all of you the protection of the Holy Infant Jesus, his Immaculate Mother and Saint Joseph.

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