"A loyal friend ever at our side"

"By being born in a manger, God himself launches the only true revolution that can give hope and dignity to the disinherited and the outcast: the revolution of love, the revolution of tenderness," writes Pope Francis in his Apostolic Letter entitled *Admirabile signum*, signed in Greccio on the first Sunday of Advent 2019.

It was in the town of Greccio that Saint Francis of Assisi first enacted a representation of the mystery of Christmas in 1223. In all probability he was inspired by fragments of the manger in which the Infant Jesus had been laid, which he had just contemplated in Rome, in the basilica of Saint Mary Major, and by the landscape of Reatina Valley which reminded him particularly of Bethlehem. Thus, after the journey to the Holy Land, Francis realized through the simplicity of this sign, "a great work of evangelization" as the Holy Father explains.

"The nativity scene shows God as he came into our world, but it also makes us reflect on how our life is part of God's own life. It invites us to become his disciples if we want to attain ultimate meaning in life," the Pope affirms in this moving text. "In Jesus, the Father has given us a brother who comes to seek us out whenever we are confused or lost, a loyal friend ever at our side. He gave us his Son who forgives us and frees us from our sins."

The successor of Peter compares the crib to a "living Gospel" wanting, through this Apostolic Letter, "to encourage the beautiful family tradition of preparing the nativity scene in the days before Christmas, but also the custom of setting it up in the workplace, in schools, hospitals, prisons and town squares."

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