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Pope Benedict XVI

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The Marian Thoughts of Pope Benedict XVI

August 7, 2005 to August 21, 2005



August 15, 2005: HOMILY on the feast of the Assumption - Castel Gandolfo

Called, like Mary, to be filled with God's Word

Dear Brothers in the Episcopate and in the

Priesthood, Dear Brothers and Sisters,

First of all, I offer a cordial greeting to you all. It gives me great joy to celebrate Mass in this beautiful parish church on the day of the Assumption.

... The Feast of the Assumption is a day of joy. God has won. Love has won. It has won life. Love has shown that it is stronger than death, that God possesses the true strength and that his strength is goodness and love. Mary was taken up body and soul into Heaven: there is even room in God for the body. Heaven is no longer a very remote sphere unknown to us. We have a mother in Heaven. And the Mother of God, the Mother of the Son of God, is our Mother. He

himself has said so. He made her our Mother when he said to the disciple and to all of us: "Behold, your Mother!" We have a Mother in Heaven. Heaven is open, Heaven has a heart.

A portrait of Mary

In the Gospel we heard the *Magnificat*, that great poem inspired by the Holy Spirit that came from Mary's lips, indeed, from Mary's heart. This marvelous canticle mirrors the entire soul, the entire personality of Mary. We can say that this hymn of hers is a portrait of Mary, a true icon in which we can see her exactly as she is. I would like to highlight only two points in this great canticle.

It begins with the word "Magnificat": my soul "magnifies" the Lord, that is, "proclaims the greatness" of the Lord. Mary wanted God to be great in the world, great in her life and present among us all. She was not afraid that God might be a "rival" in our life, that with his greatness he might encroach on our freedom, our vital space. She knew that if God is great, we too are great. Our life is not oppressed but raised and expanded: it is precisely then that it becomes great in the splendor of God.

The fact that our first parents thought the contrary was the core of original sin. They feared that if God were too great, he would take something away from their life. They thought that they could set God aside to make room for themselves.

This was also the great temptation of the modern age, of the past three or four centuries. More and more people have thought and said: "But this God does not give us our freedom; with all his commandments, he restricts the space in our lives. So God has to disappear; we want to be autonomous and independent. Without this God we ourselves would be gods and do as we pleased."

This was also the view of the Prodigal Son, who did not realize that he was "free" precisely because he was in his father's house. He left for distant lands and squandered his estate. In the end, he realized that precisely because he had gone so far away from his father, instead of being free he had become a slave; he understood that only by returning home to his father's house would he be truly free, in the fully beauty of life.

This is how it is in our modern epoch. Previously, it was thought and believed that by setting God aside and being autonomous, following our own ideas and inclinations, we would truly be free to do whatever we liked without anyone being able to give us orders. But when God disappears, men and women do not become greater; indeed, they lose the divine dignity, their faces lose God's splendour. In the end, they turn out to be merely products of a blind evolution and, as such, can be used and abused. This is precisely what the experience of our epoch has confirmed for us.

Ensuring God's greatness

Only if God is great is humankind also great. With Mary, we must begin to understand that this is so. We must not drift away from God but make God present; we must ensure that he is great in our lives. Thus, we too will become divine; all the splendor of the divine dignity will then be ours. Let us apply this to our own lives.

It is important that God be great among us, in public and in private life.

In public life, it is important that God be present, for example, through the cross on public buildings, and that he be present in our community life, for only if God is present do we have an orientation, a common direction; otherwise, disputes become impossible to settle, for our common dignity is no longer recognized.

Let us make God great in public and in private life. This means making room for God in our lives every day, starting in the morning with prayers, and then dedicating time to God, giving Sundays to God. We do not waste our free time if we offer it to God. If God enters into our time, all time becomes greater, roomier, richer.

A second observation: Mary's poem--the *Magnificat*--is quite original; yet at the same time, it is a "fabric" woven throughout the "threads" from the Old Testament, of words of God.

Thus, we see that Mary was, so to speak, "at home" with God's word, she lived on God's word, she was penetrated by God's word. To the extent that she spoke with God's words, she thought with God's words, her thoughts were God's thoughts, her words, God's words. She was penetrated by divine light and this is why she was so resplendent, so good, so radiant with love and goodness.

Mary lived on the Word of God, she was imbued with the Word of God. And the fact that she was immersed in the Word of God and was totally familiar with the Word also endowed her later with the inner enlightenment of wisdom.

Whoever thinks with God thinks well, and whoever speaks to God speaks well. They have valid criteria to judge all the things of the world. They become prudent, wise, and at the same time good; they also become strong and courageous with the strength of God, who resists evil and fosters good in the world.

Filled with God's Word

Thus, Mary speaks with us, speaks to us, invites us to know the Word of God, to love the Word of God, to live with the Word of God, to think with the Word of God. And we can do so in many different ways: by reading Sacred Scripture, by participating especially in the Liturgy, in

which Holy Church throughout the year opens the entire book of Sacred Scripture to us. She opens it to our lives and makes it present in our lives.

But I am also thinking of the *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church* that we recently published, in which the Word of God is applied to our lives and the reality of our lives interpreted; it helps us enter into the great “temple” of God’s Word, to learn to love it and, like Mary, to be penetrated by this Word.

Thus, life becomes luminous and we have the basic criterion with which to judge; at the same time, we receive goodness and strength.

Mary is taken up body and soul into the glory of Heaven, and with God and in God she is Queen of Heaven and earth. And is she really so remote from us?

The contrary is true. Precisely because she is with God and in God, she is very close to each one of us.

While she lived on this earth she could only be close to a few people. Being in God, who is close to us, actually, “within” all of us, Mary shares in this closeness of God. Being in God and with God, she is close to each one of us, knows our hearts, can hear our prayers, can help us with her motherly kindness and has been given to us, as the Lord said, precisely as a “mother” to whom we can turn at every moment.

She always listens to us, she is always close to us, and being Mother of the Son, participates in the power of the Son and in his goodness. We can always entrust the whole of our lives to this Mother, who is not far from any one of us.

On this feast day, let us thank the Lord for the gift of the Mother, and let us pray to Mary to help us find the right path every day. Amen.

August 18, 2005: Arrival in Germany, Cologne

Who can accompany us better on this demanding journey of holiness than Mary? Who can teach us to adore Christ better than she? May she help especially the new generations to recognize the true face of God in Christ and to worship, love and serve him with total dedication.

August 7, 2005: Castel Gandolfo

I am pleased to announce that the next World Youth Day will take place in Sydney, Australia, in 2008. We entrust to the maternal guidance of Mary most holy, the future course of the young people of the whole world.



August 18, 2005: Cologne Airport

May the Virgin Mary, who presented the Child Jesus to the Magi when they arrived in Bethlehem to worship the Saviour, continue to intercede for us, just as for centuries she has kept watch over the German people from her many shrines throughout the German Länder.

August 18, 2005: Message to Young People, Cologne, Germany

Dear young people, the happiness you are seeking, the happiness you have a right to enjoy has a name and a face: It is Jesus of Nazareth, hidden in the Eucharist. Only he gives the fullness of life to humanity! With Mary, say your own "yes" to God, for he wishes to give himself to you.

August 19, 2005: Homily to Seminarians in Cologne

Virgin Mother of the Redeemer, who in the month of August we remember in the Assumption to Heaven, watch over those who are preparing to participate in the World Youth Day. You, who always go before us in the pilgrimage of faith, guide especially youths who are in search of true good and authentic joy.

August 20, 2005: Address at World Youth Day Vigil, Cologne

In our pilgrimage with the mysterious Magi from the East, we have arrived at the moment which Saint Matthew describes in his Gospel with these words: "Going into the house (over which the star had halted), they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshipped him" (Matthew 2:11). Outwardly, their journey was now over. They had reached their goal. But at this point a new journey began for them, an inner pilgrimage which changed their whole lives. Their mental picture of the infant King they were expecting to find must have been very different.

"Going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshipped him" (Matthew 2:11). Dear friends, this is not a distant story that took place long ago. It is with us now. Here in the sacred Host he is present before us and in our midst. As at that time, so now he is mysteriously veiled in a sacred silence; as at that time, it is here that the true face of God is revealed. For us he became a grain of wheat that falls on the ground and dies and bears fruit until the end of the world (cf. John 12:24). He is present now as he was then in Bethlehem. He invites us to that inner pilgrimage which is called adoration. Let us set off on this pilgrimage of the spirit and let us ask him to be our guide. Amen.

This is the panorama that World Youth Day opens up before us: It invites us to look to the future. For the Church, and especially for pastors, parents and educators, young people are a living call to faith and hope. My venerable Predecessor, in choosing for this 20th World Youth Day the theme: "We Have Come To Worship Him" (Matthew 2:2), implicitly confirmed this call. He marked out a clear path for young people to follow. He urged them to seek Christ, with the Magi as their model; he invited them to follow the star, a reflection of Christ in the firmament of personal and social life; he trained them, by his strong but gentle example, to bend the knee before God made man, the Son of the Virgin Mary, and to acknowledge in him the Redeemer of humanity.

It is a challenging appeal, but what great consolation it brings to the heart of a pastor! May the memory of these hope-filled days spent in Cologne sustain your ministry, our ministry. I offer you my affectionate encouragement, together with a fervent fraternal request to live and work together in unity, on the basis of a communion that has its summit and its inexhaustible source in the Eucharist. Entrusting you to Mary Most Holy, Mother of Christ and of the Church, I cordially impart to each of you and to all your communities a special apostolic blessing.

During this World Youth Day we will reflect together on the theme: "We Have Come To Worship Him" (Matthew 2:2). This is a precious opportunity for thinking more deeply about the meaning of life as a "pilgrimage," guided by a "star," in search of the Lord. Together we shall consider the Magi, who, coming from various distant lands, were among the first to recognize the promised Messiah in Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of the Virgin Mary, and to bow down in worship before him (cf. Matthew 2:1-12).

May the Virgin Mary, who presented the Child Jesus to the Magi when they arrived in Bethlehem to worship the Savior, continue to intercede for us, just as for centuries she has kept watch over the German people from her many shrines throughout the German Länder. May the Lord bless everyone here present, together with all the pilgrims and all who live in this land. May God protect the Federal Republic of Germany!

World Youth Day (August 19-21)

During his time in the seminary, a particularly important process of maturation takes place in the consciousness of the young seminarian: he no longer sees the Church "from the outside," but rather, as it were, "from the inside," and he comes to sense that she is his "home," in as much as she is the home of Christ, where "Mary his mother" dwells.

It is Mary who shows him Jesus her Son; she introduces him and in a sense enables him to see and touch Jesus, and to take him into his arms. Mary teaches the seminarian to contemplate Jesus with the eyes of the heart and to make Jesus his very life. Each moment of seminary life can be an opportunity for loving experience of the presence of our

Lady, who introduces everyone to an encounter with Christ in the silence of meditation, prayer and fraternity. Mary helps us to meet the Lord above all in the celebration of the Eucharist, when, in the Word and in the consecrated Bread, he becomes our daily spiritual nourishment.

"They fell down and worshipped him ... and offered him gifts: gold, frankincense and myrrh" (Matthew 2:11-12). Here is the culmination of the whole journey: encounter becomes adoration; it blossoms into an act of faith and love which acknowledges in Jesus, born of Mary, the Son of God made man. How can we fail to see prefigured in this gesture of the Magi the faith of Simon Peter and of the other Apostles, the faith of Paul and of all the saints, particularly of the many saintly seminarians and priests who have graced the two thousand years of the Church's history?



Dear seminarians! One day, God willing, by the consecration of the Holy Spirit you too will begin your mission. Remember always the words of Jesus: "Abide in my love" (John 15:9). If you abide in Christ, you will bear much fruit. You have not chosen him, he has chosen you (cf. John 15:16). Here is the secret of your vocation and your mission! It is kept in the Immaculate Heart of Mary, who watches over each one of you with a mother's love. Have recourse to her, often and with confidence. I assure you of my affection and my daily prayers. And I bless all of you from my heart.

To all the young Polish people, I extend a warm embrace! As the great Pope John Paul II would say: Keep the flame of faith alive in your lives and in your people. May Our Lady, Mother of Christ, guide your steps always.