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Pope Benedict XVI

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February 11 to February 26, 2006



2006

**February 11, 2006: "The Virgin Expressed God's
Tenderness for the Suffering"**

... Fourteen years ago, 11 February, the liturgical memorial of Our Lady of Lourdes, became World Day of the Sick. We all know that the Virgin expressed God's tenderness for the suffering in the Grotto of Massabielle. This tenderness, this loving concern, is felt in an especially lively way in the world precisely on the day of the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, re-presenting in the liturgy, and especially in the Eucharist, the mystery of Christ, Redeemer of Man, of whom the Immaculate Virgin is the first fruit.

In presenting herself to Bernadette as the Immaculate Conception, Mary Most Holy came to remind the modern world, which was in danger of forgetting it, of the primacy of divine grace which is stronger than sin and death. And so it was that the site of her apparition, the Grotto of Massabielle at Lourdes, became a focal point that attracts the entire People of God, especially those who feel oppressed and suffering in body and spirit. "Come to me all of you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28), Jesus

said. In Lourdes he continues to repeat this invitation, with the motherly mediation of Mary, to all those who turn to him with trust.

...The soul of the prayer is, therefore, the celebration of divine grace that has come into Mary's heart and life, making her the Mother of the Lord. We hear precisely the Virgin's voice speaking in this way of her Savior, who has done great things in her soul and body.

In a little while, to re-create the spiritual atmosphere of Lourdes, all the lights in the basilica will be switched off and we will light our candles, symbols of faith and of the ardent invocation of God. The singing of the Ave Maria of Lourdes will invite us to go in spirit to the Grotto of Massabielle, to the feet of the Immaculate Virgin. With profound faith let us present to her our human condition, our illnesses, a sign of neediness that is common to us all as we journey on in this earthly pilgrimage to be saved by her Son Jesus Christ. May Mary keep our hope alive so that, faithful to Christ's teaching, we renew the commitment to relieving our brethren in their sickness.

February 15, 2006: "The Lord Places Himself on the Side of the Least"

The soul of the prayer is, therefore, the celebration of divine grace that has come into Mary's heart and life, making her the Mother of the Lord. We hear precisely the Virgin's voice speaking in this way of her Savior, who has done great things in her soul and body.

The profound structure of her canticle of prayer is praise, thanksgiving, grateful joy. But this personal testimony is not solitary and private, merely individualistic, as the Virgin Mary is conscious that she has a mission to fulfill for humanity and that her life is framed in the history of salvation. Thus she can say: "His mercy is from age to age to those who fear him" (verse 50). With this praise to the Lord, the Virgin gives voice to all creatures redeemed after her "fiat," who in the figure of Jesus, born of the Virgin, find the mercy of God.

At this point develops the second poetic and spiritual movement of the Magnificat (cf. verses 51-55). It has the tone of a choir, as if to Mary's voice were joined that of the community of the faithful, which celebrates God's amazing decisions. In the Greek original of the Gospel of Luke we find seven verbs in aorist, which indicate many other actions that the Lord has carried out permanently in history: "he has shown strength with his arm ..., he has scattered the proud ..., he has put down the mighty from their thrones ..., exalted those of low degree ..., he has filled the hungry with good things ..., the rich he has sent empty away ..., has helped his servant Israel."

... in the end, his secret strength is destined to manifest who God's real favorites are: the "faithful" to his Word, "the humble," "the hungry," "his servant Israel," namely, the community of the People of God that, as Mary, is constituted by those who are "poor," pure and simple of heart.

It is that "little flock" which Jesus invites not to be afraid, as the Father has willed to give it his kingdom (cf. Luke 12:32). ...

Let us accept, then, the invitation that St. Ambrose makes to us in his commentary on the Magnificat. The great doctor of the Church exhorts: "In the heart of each one may Mary praise the Lord, in each may the spirit of Mary rejoice in the Lord; if, according to the flesh, Christ has only one mother, according to faith all souls engender Christ; each one, in fact, receives in himself the Word of God ... Mary's soul magnifies the Lord and her spirit rejoices in God as, consecrated with her soul and spirit to the Father and to the Son, she adores with devout affection only one God, from whom everything proceeds, and only one Lord, in virtue of whom all things exist" (*"Esposizione del Vangelo Secondo Luca," 2,26-27: Saemo, XI, Milan-Rome, 1978, p. 169*).

In this wonderful commentary on the Magnificat of St. Ambrose I am always moved by this amazing word: "If, according to the flesh, Christ has only one mother, according to faith all souls engender Christ; each one, in fact, receives in himself the Word of God." Thus the holy doctor, interpreting the words of the Virgin herself, invites us to offer the Lord a dwelling in our souls and in our lives. Not only must we bear him in our hearts, but we must take him to the world, so that we too might engender Christ for our times. Let us pray to the Lord to help us to praise him with Mary's spirit and soul and to take Christ again to our world. ...

[Excerpts from the English summary:]

... The first part of the canticle portrays Mary rejoicing in the grace which has come into her heart and her life. She does this in a personal way, but is aware also of her mission to all humanity.

The second part places Mary's words of praise in harmony with the whole history of the faithful. They celebrate the surprising choices of God who "scatters the proud-hearted" ... "casts the mighty from their thrones" ... "fills the starving with good things."

Let us conclude by associating ourselves with the invitation of the great St. Ambrose: "May each one of us glorify the Lord with the soul of Mary and rejoice in God with the spirit of Mary."

... May your time in Rome strengthen your faith and renew your love for the Lord and his Blessed Mother.

To Mary, "the living fount of hope" (Dante Alighieri, *Paradiso*, XXXIII, 12), we entrust our Lenten journey, so that she may lead us to her Son. I commend to her in particular the multitudes who suffer poverty and cry out for help, support and understanding. With these sentiments, I cordially impart to all of you a special Apostolic Blessing.
From the Message of His Holiness Benedict XVI for Lent 2006

February 22, 2006: On the Feast of the Chair of St. Peter

Which was, then, the "cathedra" of St. Peter? He, chosen by Christ as "rock" on which to build the Church (cf. Matthew 16:18), began his ministry in Jerusalem, after the ascension of the Lord and Pentecost. The first "seat" of the Church was the Cenacle, and in all probability in that room, where Mary, the Mother of Jesus, also prayed with the disciples, a special place was reserved for Simon Peter.

February 24, 2006: Papal Address to Italian Christian Workers' Associations

...May God accompany you and the Blessed Virgin protect you.

February 25, 2006: Benedict XVI's Discourse to Roman Major Seminary

It gives me great pleasure to be with you this evening at the Roman Major Seminary on such a special occasion as the feast of your patroness, Our Lady of Trust. ...

It really is very beautiful and meaningful that you venerate the Virgin Mary, Mother of Priests, with the special title of Our Lady of Trust. It evokes a twofold meaning: the trust of the seminarians who, with her help, set out on their journey in response to Christ who has called them, and the trust of the Church of Rome, especially that of her bishop, which invokes the protection of Mary, the Mother of every vocation, upon this nursery-garden of priests.

It is with Mary's help, dear seminarians, that today you can prepare for your mission as priests at the service of the Church. A moment ago, when I paused in prayer before the venerable image of Our Lady of Trust in your chapel, which is the heart of your seminary, I prayed for each one of you. ... And I also called upon the Mother of the Redeemer to obtain for you the gift of holiness. May the Holy Spirit, who shaped the priestly Heart of Jesus in the Virgin's womb and later at the house in Nazareth, work within you with his grace, preparing you for the future tasks that will be entrusted to you.

It is equally beautiful and appropriate today that together with the Virgin Mother of Trust, we should venerate in a special way her husband, St. Joseph, who has inspired Monsignor Marco Frisina's Oratory this year. I thank him for his sensitivity, for having chosen to honor my holy patron, and I congratulate him on this composition, while I warmly thank the soloists, the choir, the organist and all the members of the orchestra.

This oratory, significantly entitled "Shadow of the Father," affords me an opportunity to emphasize how the example of St. Joseph, a "just man," the Evangelist says, fully responsible before God and before Mary, should be an encouragement to all of you on your way toward

the priesthood.

Joseph appears to us ever attentive to the voice of the Lord, who guides the events of history, and ready to follow the instructions, ever faithful, generous and detached in service, an effective teacher of prayer and of work in the hidden life at Nazareth. I can assure you, dear seminarians, that the further you advance with God's grace on the path of the priesthood, the more you will experience what abundant spiritual fruits result from calling on St. Joseph and invoking his support in carrying out your daily duty.

Dear seminarians, please accept my most cordial best wishes for your present and your future. I place them in the hands of Mary Most Holy, Our Lady of Trust. May those who are formed at the Roman Major Seminary learn to repeat the beautiful invocation, "*Mater mea, fiducia mea,*" your distinctive motto that was coined by my Venerable Predecessor Benedict XV. I pray that these words will be impressed upon the hearts of each one of you and will accompany you always, in your life and in your priestly ministry. Thus, you will be able to spread around you, wherever you may be, the fragrance of Mary's trust which is trust in God's provident and faithful love.

February 26, 2006: Angelus Address

May our guide and teacher in our Lenten journey be Mary Most Holy, who, when Jesus went with determination to Jerusalem to suffer the passion, followed him with total faith. As a "new amphora" she received the "new wine" prepared by the Son for the messianic betrothal (cf. Mark 2:22). And, in this way, she was the first to receive under the Cross that grace, poured out by the pierced heart of the son, incarnation of the love of God for humanity, that she herself, had requested with a mother's instinct for the bride and groom of Cana (cf. "*Deus Caritas Est,*" Nos. 13-15).

[After praying the Angelus, the Pope made this appeal:] May all, through the intercession of the Holy Virgin, again encounter him, who is authentic peace!