

5-2006

May 2006

Pope Benedict XVI

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Benedict XVI, Pope, "May 2006" (2006). *Marian Thoughts of Pope Benedict XVI*. Paper 14.
http://ecommons.udayton.edu/imri_popes_benedict_xvi/14

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The Marian Thoughts of Pope Benedict XVI

May 7, 2006 to May 31, 2006



2006

May 7, 2006: Regina Caeli

Dear brothers and sisters, let us invoke the intercession of Mary, mother of the Church, for the priests, and men and women religious; let us pray, moreover, so that the seeds of the vocation that God sows in the hearts of the faithful will mature and bear fruits of holiness in the Church and the world.

May 11, 2006: Institute for Studies on Marriage and the Family

To be able to carry out your mission well as faithful heirs of the institute's founder, our beloved John Paul II, I invite you to contemplate Mary Most Holy, as the Mother of Beautiful Love. The redeeming love of the incarnate Word must become for each marriage and each family "fountains of living water in the midst of a thirsting world" (*"Deus Caritas Est,"* No. 42). To all of you, dear professors, students of yesterday and today, to all the staff, as well as the families of your Institute, I express my best wishes, accompanied by a special blessing.

May 12, 2006: Santa dell'Anima

"Ever since its inception," said the Pope in German, "two traits have characterized this institution: veneration for the Virgin Mary, Mother of God, and a special link with the Holy See. ... Mary extends her hands to protect the souls of pilgrims, both those on the road of life, and those on the road to Rome."

May 13, 2006: "Bayerische Gebirgsschilzen"

"With the annual celebration of the day in honor of the Patroness of Bavaria, the Virgin Mary, on the first Sunday in May," Pope Benedict said, "you place yourselves under the protection of the great Patroness of our common

homeland, but also at her service. You no longer have the duty, as in centuries past, to defend the country from foreign enemies, yet today there are dangers that are even greater, perhaps because they are not recognized as such."

May 15, 2006: Pope's Address at Shrine of Our Lady of Divine Love

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

It is a comfort to be with you today to recite the holy rosary at this Shrine of Our Lady of Divine Love, where the faithful express the devout affection for the Virgin Mary that is rooted in the soul and history of the Roman people.

Special joy springs from the thought of thus renewing the experience of my beloved predecessor John Paul II, who, on the first day of the month of May in 1979, exactly 27 years ago, made his first visit to this shrine as Pontiff.

I greet with affection the rector, Monsignor Pasquale Silla, and thank him for his cordial address. With him, I greet the other priests, Oblate Sons of Our Lady of Divine Love, and the sisters, Daughters of Our Lady of Divine Love, who are joyfully and generously devoted to serving in the shrine and the whole range of its different good works. I greet the vicar, Cardinal Camillo Ruini, and the auxiliary bishop of the Southern Sector of Rome, Bishop Paolo Schiavon, and all of you, dear brothers and sisters, who are here in large numbers.

We have recited the holy rosary going through the five joyful mysteries, which portray to the eyes of the heart the beginnings of our salvation, from Jesus' conception in the Virgin Mary's womb, brought about by the Holy Spirit, until he was found in the temple of Jerusalem when he was 12 years old, listening to the teachers and asking them questions. We have repeated and made our own the Angel's words: "Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you!" and also the words with which St. Elizabeth welcomed the Virgin who went with haste to help and serve her: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!"

We have contemplated the docile faith of Mary, who trusted in God without reserve and put herself entirely in his hands. Like the shepherds, we too have felt close to the Child Jesus lying in the manger and recognized and adored him as the eternal Son of God who, through love, became our brother, hence, our one Savior.

We too entered the temple with Mary and Joseph, to offer the Child to God and to carry out the rite of purification: And here, together with salvation, we felt ourselves anticipating, in the words of the elderly Simeon, the contradictory sign of the cross, and of the sword that beneath the cross of the Son was to pierce the Mother's soul, thereby making her not only the Mother of God but also Mother of us all.

Dear brothers and sisters, in this shrine we venerate Mary Most Holy with the title "Our Lady of Divine Love." Thus, full light is shed on the bond that united Mary with the Holy Spirit from the very beginning of her existence when, as she was being conceived, the Spirit, the eternal Love of the Father and of the Son, made their dwelling within her and preserved her from any shadow of sin; then again, when the same Spirit brought the Son of God into being in her womb; and yet again when, with the grace of the Spirit, Mary's own words were fulfilled through the whole span of her life: "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord"; and lastly, when, by the power of the Holy Spirit, Mary was taken up physically to be beside the Son in the glory of God the Father.

"Mary," I wrote in the encyclical *"Deus Caritas Est,"* "is a woman who loves.... As a believer who in faith thinks with God's thoughts and wills with God's will, she cannot fail to be a woman who loves" (No. 41). Yes, dear brothers and sisters, Mary is the fruit and sign of the love God has for us, of his tenderness and mercy. Therefore, together with our brothers in the faith of all times and all places, we turn to her in our needs and hopes, in the joyful and sorrowful events of life. My thoughts go at this moment, with deep sympathy, to the family in the Island of Ischia, hit by yesterday's disaster.

In the month of May an increasing number of people come here as pilgrims from the parishes of Rome and also from many other districts, to pray and to enjoy the beauty and restful tranquility of these places. From here, from this Shrine of Divine Love, we therefore expect powerful help and spiritual support for the Diocese of Rome, for myself, its Bishop, and for the other bishops my collaborators, for the priests, for families, for vocations, for the poor, the suffering and the sick, for the children and for the elderly, for the entire beloved Italian nation.

We are expecting in particular the inner energy to fulfill the vow made by the Roman people on June 4, 1944, when they solemnly asked Our Lady of Divine Love that this city be preserved from the horrors of war, and they were heard: the vow and the promise, that is, to correct and improve one's own moral conduct to bring it more into line with that of the Lord Jesus.

Today too, there is a need to convert to God, to God who is Love, so that the world may be freed from war and terrorism. We are unfortunately reminded of this by the victims, such as the servicemen who fell last Thursday in Nasiriyah in Iraq, whom we entrust to the motherly intercession of Mary, Queen of Peace.

Dear brothers and sisters, from this Shrine of Our Lady of Divine Love, I therefore renew the invitation I expressed in the encyclical *"Deus Caritas Est"*: "To practice love and in this way to cause the light of God to enter into the world" (No. 39). Amen!

May 26, 2006: "Place Yourselves in the School of Mary"

Dear men and women religious, consecrated persons, who moved by the voice of Jesus, have followed him out of love!

Dear seminarians, who are preparing yourselves for the priestly ministry! Dear representatives of ecclesial movements, who bring the power of the Gospel to your families, to your workplaces, to universities, to the world of media and culture, to your parishes!

Just as the apostles together with Mary "went to the Upper Room" and there "with one accord devoted themselves to prayer" (Acts 1:12,14), so we too have come together today at Jasna Gora, which for us at this hour is the "upper room" where Mary, the Mother of the Lord, is among us. Today it is she who leads our meditation; she teaches us how to pray. Mary shows us how to open our minds and our hearts to the power of the Holy Spirit, who comes to us so as to be brought to the whole world.

We need a moment of silence and recollection to place ourselves in her school, so that she may teach us how to live from faith, how to grow in faith, how to remain in contact with the mystery of God in the ordinary, everyday events of our lives. With feminine tact and with "the ability to combine penetrating intuition with words of support and encouragement" (John Paul II, *"Redemptoris Mater,"* No. 46), Mary sustained the faith of Peter and the apostles in the Upper Room, and today she sustains my faith and your faith.

"Faith is contact with the mystery of God" (John Paul II, *"Redemptoris Mater,"* No. 17), because "to believe means 'to abandon oneself to the truth of the word of the living God, knowing and humbly recognizing 'how unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways'" (John Paul II, *"Redemptoris Mater,"* No. 14).

Faith is the gift, given to us in baptism, which makes our encounter with God possible. God is hidden in mystery; to claim to understand him would mean to want to confine him within our thinking and knowing and consequently to lose him irremediably. With faith, however, we can open up a way through concepts, even theological concepts, and can "touch" the living God. And God, once touched, immediately gives us his power. When we abandon ourselves to the living God, when in humility of mind we have recourse to him, a kind of hidden stream of divine life pervades us. How important it is to believe in the power of faith, in its capacity to establish a close bond with the living God!

We must give great attention to the development of our faith, so that it truly pervades all our attitudes, thoughts, actions and intentions. Faith has a place, not only in our state of soul and religious experiences, but above all in thought and action, in everyday work, in the struggle against ourselves, in community life and in the apostolate, because it ensures that our life is pervaded by the power of God himself. Faith can always bring us back to God even when our sin leads us astray.

In the Upper Room the apostles did not know what awaited them. They were afraid and worried about their own future. They continued to marvel at the death and resurrection of Jesus and were in anguish at being left on their own after his ascension into Heaven. Mary, "she who believed in the fulfillment of the Lord's words" (cf. Luke 1:45), assiduous in prayer alongside the apostles, taught perseverance in the faith. By her own attitude she convinced them that the Holy Spirit, in his wisdom, knew well the path on which he was leading them, and that consequently they could place their confidence in God, giving themselves to him unreservedly, with their talents, their limitations and their future.

Do you remember your enthusiasm when you began the pilgrimage of the consecrated life, trusting in the

grace of God? Try not to lose this first fervor, and let Mary lead you to an ever fuller adherence. Dear men and women religious, dear consecrated persons! Whatever the mission entrusted to you, whatever cloistered or apostolic service you are engaged in, maintain in your hearts the primacy of your consecrated life. Let it renew your faith. The consecrated life, lived in faith, unites you closely to God, calls forth charisms and confers an extraordinary fruitfulness to your service.

Dear candidates to the priesthood! So much can be gained by reflecting on the way Mary learned from Jesus! From her very first "fiat," through the long, ordinary years of the hidden life, as she brought up Jesus, or when at Cana in Galilee she asked for the first sign, or when finally on Calvary, by the cross, she looked on Jesus, she "learned" him moment by moment. Firstly in faith and then in her womb, she received the Body of Jesus and then gave birth to him. Day after day, enraptured, she adored him. She served him with solicitous love, singing the Magnificat in her heart.

On your journey of preparation, and in your future priestly ministry, let Mary guide you as you "learn" Jesus. Keep your eyes fixed on him. Let him form you, so that in your ministry you will be able to show him to all who approach you. When you take into your hands the Eucharistic Body of Jesus so as to nourish his people, and when you assume responsibility for that part of the Mystical Body which will be entrusted to you, remember the attitude of wonder and adoration which characterized Mary's faith. As she in her solicitous, maternal love for Jesus, preserved her virginal love filled with wonder, so also you, as you genuflect at the moment of consecration, preserve in your soul the ability to wonder and to adore. Know how to recognize in the People of God entrusted to you the signs of Christ's presence. Be mindful and attentive to the signs of holiness which God will show you among the faithful. Do not fear future duties or the unknown! Do not fear that words will fail you or that you will encounter rejection! The world and the Church need priests, holy priests.

.. The authenticity of your faith and mission, which does not draw attention to itself but truly radiates faith and love, can be tested by measuring it against Mary's faith. Mirror yourselves in her heart. Remain in her school!

When the Apostles, filled with the Holy Spirit, went out to the whole world proclaiming the Gospel, one of them, John, the apostle of love, took Mary into his home (cf. John 19:27). It was precisely because of his profound bond with Jesus and with Mary, that he could so effectively insist on the truth that "God is love" (1 John 4:8,16).

These were the words that I placed at the beginning of the first encyclical of my pontificate: "*Deus caritas est!*" This is the most important, most central truth about God. To all for whom it is difficult to believe in God, I say again today: "God is love." Dear friends, be witnesses to this truth. You will surely be so if you place yourselves in the school of Mary. Beside her you will experience for yourselves that God is love, and you will transmit this message to the world with the richness and the variety that the Holy Spirit will know how to enkindle. Praised be Jesus Christ.

May 26, 2006: Pilsudski Square in Warsaw

At the beginning of his pontificate. Pope John Paul II wrote to Cardinal Wyszynski: "This Polish Pope would not be on the Chair of Peter today, beginning a new pontificate, full of the fear of God, but also full of trust, had it not been for your faith, which did not bend in the face of imprisonment and suffering, your heroic hope, your trusting to the end in the Mother of the Church; had it not been for Jasna Gora and this whole period of the history of the Church in our homeland, linked to your service as bishop and primate" (Letter of Pope John Paul II to the Polish People, Oct. 23, 1978).

I ask you now, cultivate this rich heritage of faith transmitted to you by earlier generations, the heritage of the thought and the service of that great Pole who was Pope John Paul II. Stand firm in your faith, hand it down to your children, bear witness to the grace which you have experienced so abundantly through the Holy Spirit in the course of your history. May Mary, Queen of Poland, show you the way to her Son, and may she accompany you on your journey towards a happy, peace-filled future. May your hearts never be wanting in love for Christ and for his Church. Amen!

May 27, 2006: "as He Requested"

During his first journey to Poland, Pope John Paul II visited this shrine and dedicated his address to the topic of prayer. At the conclusion he said: "I ask you to pray for me here during my life and after my death." Today, I wanted to pause for a moment in the Chapel of the Blessed Virgin Mary and, with

gratitude, to pray for him as he requested. Following the example of John Paul II, I also turn to you, kindly asking that you pray for me and for all the Church.

I would also like to say, as dear Cardinal Stanislaw said, that I hope Divine Providence will soon concede the beatification and canonization of our beloved Pope John Paul II.

May 28, 2006: Krakow, Poland

... May Mary intercede for you and obtain for you all the graces that you need.

May 31, 2006: Trip to Poland

I will not be able to forget the visit to the famous Marian shrine of Jasna Gora. On that Clear Mountain, heart of the Polish nation, as if it were a cenacle, very many faithful, especially men and women religious, seminarians and representatives of the ecclesial movements, gathered around the Successor of Peter to listen with me to Mary.

Inspired by the wonderful Marian meditation that John Paul II gave the Church in the encyclical "*Redemptoris Mater*," I wished to propose the faith again as a fundamental attitude of the spirit, which is not something merely intellectual or sentimental. Authentic faith involves the whole person: his thoughts, affections, intentions, relationships, corporeal nature, activity and daily work.

Later visiting the wonderful shrine of Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, near Krakow, I prayed to Our Lady of Sorrows to support the faith of the ecclesial community in moments of difficulty and trial; ...

I wished to visit other symbolic "shrines": I am referring to Wadowice, the locality which has become famous because Karol Wojtyla was born and was baptized there. The visit gave me the opportunity to thank the Lord for the gift of this tireless servant of the Gospel. The roots of his strong faith, of his very sensitive and open humanity, of his love of beauty and truth, of his devotion to the Virgin, of his love of the Church and above all of his vocation to holiness are found in this small city in which he received his early education and formation. ...

May 31, 2006: Holy Father Appeals for Peace in East Timor

The Holy Father invited the 35,000 people in St. Peter's Square to "pray to the Blessed Virgin so that she will sustain with her maternal protection the efforts of all those who are contributing to the pacification of spirits and the return to normality."