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Pope Benedict XVI

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The Marian Thoughts of Pope Benedict XVI

December 1, 2006 to December 31, 2006



2006

Papal Homily in Istanbul's Catholic Cathedral "Church's Mission Is to Offer Christ" – Istanbul, Turkey in the Catholic Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, December 1, 2006

Brothers and sisters, let us now hand over our desire to serve the Lord to the Virgin Mary, Mother of God and Servant of the Lord. She prayed in company with the Apostles in the Upper Room, in the days leading up to Pentecost. Together with her, let us pray to Christ her Son: Send forth, O Lord, your Holy Spirit upon the whole Church, that he may dwell in each of her members and make them heralds of your Gospel!

Christ Is Coming! Angelus Address on December 3, 2006

To live this Advent period more authentically and fruitfully, the liturgy exhorts us to look at Mary most holy and to undertake spiritually with her the path to the cave of Bethlehem. When God knocked on the door of her youth, she received him with faith and love. In a few days, we will contemplate her in the luminous mystery of her Immaculate Conception. Let us be attracted by her beauty, reflection of divine glory, so that "the God that is coming" will find in each one of us a good and open heart, which he can fill with his gifts.

Vespers of First Sunday of Advent Vatican City, December 2, 2006 in St. Peter Basilica

The archetype for that coming of Christ, which we might call a "spiritual incarnation", is always Mary. Just as the Virgin Mother pondered in her heart on the Word made flesh, so every individual soul and the entire Church are called during their earthly pilgrimage to wait for Christ who comes and to welcome him with faith and love ever new.

... Let us allow the Virgin Mary, Mother of the God-who-comes and Mother of Hope, to guide us in this waiting. May she whom we will celebrate as Immaculate in a few days obtain for us that we be found holy and immaculate in love

at the coming of Our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be praise and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Benedict XVI's Evaluation of Turkish Trip

"The Affection and Cordiality That Surrounded Me ..." General Audience December 6, 2006

... The second day took me to Ephesus, and I thus found myself rapidly in the innermost "circle" of the trip, in direct contact with the Catholic community. In Ephesus, in fact, in a pleasant place called "Nightingale's Hill," looking over the Aegean Sea, is the Shrine of Mary's House. It is an ancient and small chapel that has arisen around the little house that, according to a very ancient tradition, the Apostle John built for the Virgin Mary, after going with her to Ephesus. Jesus himself had entrusted them to one another when, before dying on the cross, he said to Mary:

"Woman, behold, your son!" and to John : "Behold, your mother!" (John 19:26-27).

Archaeological investigations have demonstrated that this place has been since time immemorial a place of Marian devotion, loved also by Muslims, who go there regularly to venerate her whom they call "Meryem Ana," Mother Mary. In the garden next to the shrine I celebrated holy Mass for a group of faithful who had come from nearby Izmir and other parts of Turkey, as well as from abroad. We felt truly "at home" in "Mary's House," and in that atmosphere of peace we prayed for peace in the Holy Land and throughout the world. ...

Let us pray, moreover, so that through the intercession of Mary Most Holy, the Holy Spirit will make this apostolic journey fruitful, and encourage throughout the world the mission of the Church, instituted by Christ to proclaim to all peoples the Gospel of truth, peace and love.

[At the end of the audience, the Holy Father greeted pilgrims in several languages. In English, he said:]

... I visited Ephesus and the sanctuary nearby where, according to an ancient tradition, the Apostle John constructed a house for the Virgin Mary.

On Mary, Full of Grace

"God Was Captivated by Mary's Humility" Angelus Address on December 8, 2006

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

Today we celebrate one of the most beautiful and popular feasts of the Blessed Virgin -- the Immaculate Conception. Not only did Mary not commit any sin, but she was also preserved from that common inheritance of the human race which is original sin, because of the mission to which God had destined her from all eternity: to be the mother of the Redeemer.

All this is contained in the truth of the faith of the Immaculate Conception. The biblical foundation of this dogma is found in the words the Angel addressed to the maiden of Nazareth: "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you!" (Luke 1:28). "Full of grace," in the Greek original "kecharitomene," is Mary's most beautiful name, the name God himself gave her to indicate that from all eternity and forever she is the beloved, the chosen one, chosen to receive the most precious gift, Jesus, "the incarnate love of God" ("Deus Caritas Est," 12).

We might ask ourselves: Why did God choose, among all women, Mary of Nazareth specifically? The answer is hidden in the unfathomable mystery of the divine will. However, there is a reason that the Gospel highlights: her humility.

Dante Alighieri underlines this in the last canto of "Paradise": "Virgin mother, daughter of your Son, humble and loftier than any other creature, fixed term of the eternal counsel" (Paradise XXXIII, 1-3). The Virgin herself in the Magnificat, her canticle of praise, says this: "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord ... For he has looked upon his handmaid's lowliness" (Luke 1:46, 48). Yes, God was captivated by Mary's humility, who found favor in his eyes. (cf. Luke 1:30). In this way she became the Mother of God, image and model of the Church, chosen among the peoples to receive the Lord's blessing and radiate it to the whole human family.

This "blessing" is Jesus Christ himself. He is the source of "grace," of which Mary was full from the first instance of her existence. With faith she received Jesus and with love she gave him to the world. This is also our vocation and our mission, the vocation and mission of the Church: to receive Christ in our lives and give him to the world "so that the world might be saved by him" (John 3:17).

Dear Brothers and Sisters: The feast of the Immaculate Conception illuminates like a beacon the season of Advent, which is a time of vigilant and confident awaiting of the Savior. While we go out to encounter God, who comes, let us look at Mary who "shines as a sign of sure hope and of consolation for the people of God on the way" ("Lumen Gentium," 68).

With this awareness I invite you to join me in the afternoon when, in Piazza di Spagna, I will renew the traditional homage to this gentle Mother by grace and of grace. We now turn to her with the prayer that recalls the angel's announcement.

[Translation by ZENIT]

[At the end of the Angelus, the Holy Father greeted pilgrims in several languages. In English, he said:]

I greet all the English-speaking visitors present at this Angelus. Today the Church celebrates the Immaculate Conception of our Lord's mother, Mary. She who was conceived without sin is a constant reminder of God's covenant with his chosen people, a promise that is fulfilled in our savior Jesus Christ.

May Christians everywhere, following the example of Mary, allow the gift of grace to bear fruit in a life of holiness. I wish you a happy feast day and a pleasant stay in Rome.

Pope's Homage to the Immaculate Conception "Show Yourself Mother of All" Piazza di Spagna December 8, 2006

Mary, Virgin Immaculate:

This year we again gather with filial love at the foot of your image to renew to you the homage of the Christian community and of the city of Rome. We come in prayer, following the tradition inaugurated by preceding Popes, on the solemn day in which the liturgy celebrates your Immaculate Conception, mystery that is source of joy and hope for all the redeemed.

We greet you and invoke you with the words of the Angel: "full of grace" (Luke 1:28), the most beautiful name with which God himself called you from eternity.

You are "full of grace," Mary, full of divine love from the first instance of your existence providentially predestined to be the mother of the Redeemer, and intimately associated to him in the mystery of salvation.

In your Immaculate Conception shines the vocation of Christ's disciples, called to become, with his grace, saints and immaculate through love (cf. Ephesians 1:4). In you shines the dignity of every human being, who is always precious in the eyes of the creator.

Whoever looks at you, all holy Mother, does not lose his serenity, no matter how sorely tried in life. Although the experience of sin is sad, as it sullies the dignity of the children of God, whoever takes recourse to you rediscovers the beauty of truth and of love, and again finds the way that leads to the Father's house.

You are "full of grace," Mary, who, on accepting with your "yes" the plans of the creator, opened to us the way of salvation. Teach us to utter also our "yes" to the Lord's will. A "yes" that is united to your "yes" without reservations or shadows, a "yes" of which the Father has wished to have need to beget the new Man, Christ, the only savior of the world and of history.

Give us the courage to say "no" to the deceptions of power, money, pleasure: to dishonest earnings, to corruption and hypocrisy, to egoism and violence. "No" to the evil one, deceitful prince of the world. "Yes" to Christ, who destroys the power of evil with the omnipotence of love. We know that only hearts converted to love, which is God, can build a better future for all.

You are "full of grace," Mary! Your name is for all generations pledge of sure hope. Yes, because as the supreme poet Dante wrote, for us, mortals, you "are the living source of hope" (Paradise, XXXIII, 12). We take recourse again to this source, spring of your Immaculate Heart, as trusting pilgrims, to draw faith and consolation, joy and love, security and peace.

Virgin "full of grace," show yourself a tender and loving mother with the inhabitants of this your city, so that the authentic evangelical spirit will animate and orient their conduct; show yourself mother and vigilant guardian of Italy and Europe, so that from the ancient Christian roots people will be able to draw the sap to build their present and future; show yourself a provident and merciful mother to the whole world so that,

respecting human dignity and rejecting every form of violence and exploitation, firm foundations will be laid for the civilization of love.

Show yourself a mother especially to the neediest: the defenseless, the marginalized, and the excluded, the victims of a society that often sacrifices man for other ends and interests. Show yourself mother of all, Mary, and give us Christ, hope of the world! "Monstra te esse matrem," immaculate virgin, full of grace! Amen!

Pope's World Day of Peace Message – signed December 8, 2006

To the Queen of Peace, the Mother of Jesus Christ "our peace" (Eph 2:14), I entrust my urgent prayer for all humanity at the beginning of the year 2007, to which we look with hearts full of hope, notwithstanding the dangers and difficulties that surround us. May Mary show us, in her Son, the Way of peace, and enlighten our vision, so that we can recognize Christ's face in the face of every human person, the heart of peace!

Papal Message for World Day of the Sick to be observed on Feb. 11, 2007 the principal venue being Seoul, South Korea. Signed in the Vatican on December 8, 2006.

In conclusion, I ask ecclesial communities throughout the world, and particularly those dedicated to the service of the infirm, to continue, with the help of Mary, *Salus Infirmorum*, to bear effective witness to the loving concern of God our Father. May the Blessed Virgin, our Mother, comfort those who are ill and sustain all who have devoted their lives, as Good Samaritans, to healing the physical and spiritual wounds of those who suffer.

Address to Roman university students on December 14, 2006

[The Virgin Mary was the] first to contemplate the incarnate Word, Divine Wisdom, made human. In the Christ Child (...) she recognized God's human face in such a way that the mysterious Wisdom of the Son was impressed on the Mother's mind and heart."

This is why Mary was transformed in the "Seat of Wisdom" and is particularly venerated with this title by the Roman academic community. There is a special icon dedicated to the "Sedes Sapientiae" that, starting from Rome, has already visited various countries, making a pilgrimage through the universities. It is present here today in order to be given to the delegation from Bulgaria and Albania. I greet with affection the representatives of both these Nations and express the wish that per Mariam their respective academic communities may advance ever further in their search for truth and goodness, in the light of Divine Wisdom.

Joy of the Third Sunday of Advent – December 17, 2006 "A Prophetic Proclamation Destined for the Whole of Humanity"

To transform the world, God chose a humble maiden from a town of Galilee, Mary of Nazareth, and called her with this greeting: "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you." In these words is found the secret of the authentic Christmas. God repeats them to the Church and to each one of us. Rejoice, the Lord is at hand! With Mary's help, let us give ourselves with humility and courage so that the world will welcome Christ, who is the source of authentic joy.

Pre-Christmas Reflection "Many Think That God Is a Stranger" – December 20, 2006

"But, how can we prepare ourselves to open our hearts to the Lord who comes? The spiritual attitude of vigilant and prayerful waiting continues to be the Christian's fundamental characteristic during this time of Advent. It is the attitude that characterizes the protagonists of the time: Zechariah and Elizabeth, the shepherds, the Wise Men, the simple and humble people, but, above all, Mary's and Joseph's waiting! The latter, more than any other, experienced in the first person the emotion and trepidation for the Child about to be born. It is not difficult to imagine how they spent the last days, waiting to take the newborn in their arms. ... Let us then with Mary and Joseph prepare to open our hearts to the Lord who is at hand. Do not be distracted by the trappings! Be watchful and pray! In this way our homes will welcome Jesus with faith and love.

Recognize the Child Jesus in All Children, Urges Pope During Visit by Youths of Italian Catholic Action – December 21, 2006

The birth of Jesus is not a fable. It is a story that really happened, in Bethlehem, 2,000 years ago. Faith brings us to recognize in that little Child, born of the Virgin Mary, the true Son of God who, out of love, chose to become man. ... This 'Divine Child,' wrapped in swaddling clothes and placed in a manger with maternal care by his Mother, Mary, reveals all the goodness and infinite beauty of God. He demonstrates the faithfulness and tenderness of the boundless love with which God surrounds each of us.

A Christmas Surprise

"Tonight He Will Come" - Angelus Address December 24, 2006

May Mary help us to maintain the indispensable interior recollection necessary to experience the profound joy that the birth of our Redeemer offers. To her let us direct our prayer, thinking in particular of those that live Christmas sad and alone, sick and suffering: May the Virgin bring consolation to all of them.

[At the end of the Angelus, the Pope greeted pilgrims in several languages. In English he said:]

... The Liturgy of today's celebration invites all believers to welcome joyfully the promised Messiah who comes to us through the Virgin Mary.

Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord – Midnight Mass – December 24, 2006

... Let us ask him to give us the humility and the faith with which Saint Joseph looked upon the child that Mary had conceived by the Holy Spirit. Let us ask the Lord to let us look upon him with that same love with which Mary saw him.

Urbi English translation in: Orbi Message – Christmas 2006

"Salvator noster natus est in mundo" (Roman Missal) God became man in Jesus Christ, he was born of the Virgin Mary and today he is reborn in the Church. He brings to all the love of the Father in heaven. He is the Savior of the world!

On Feast of St. Stephen, Dec. 26

"He Died Forgiving and Praying" - Angelus Address on December 26, 2006

... Also Mary, who took the Redeemer in her arms in Bethlehem, suffered an interior martyrdom. She shared his Passion and had to take him, once again, in her arms when they took him down from the cross. To this Mother, who felt the joy of the birth and the anguish of the death of her divine Son, we entrust those who are persecuted and those who are suffering, in different ways, for witnessing and serving the Gospel.

Homily on December 31, 2006

On this evening of 31 December, two different perspectives intersect: one is linked to the end of the civil year, the other to the liturgical Solemnity of Mary Most Holy, Mother of God, which concludes the Octave of Holy Christmas. The first event is common to all, the second concerns believers. Their intersection confers a special character upon this evening celebration, in a particular spiritual atmosphere that is conducive to reflection.

... The Church is called to live these hours, making the Virgin Mary's sentiments her own. With her, the Church is invited to keep her gaze fixed on the Infant Jesus, the new Sun rising on the horizon of humanity and, comforted by his light, to take care to present to him "the joy and the hope, the grief and the anguish of the people of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted" ([*Gaudium et Spes*](#), n. 1).

... On the one hand, the solar cycle with its rhythms; on the other, what St Paul called the "fullness of time" (cf. Gal 4: 4), that is, the culminating moment of the history of the universe and of the human race when the Son of God was born in the world. The time of the promises was fulfilled and, when Mary's pregnancy reached its term, "the earth", a Psalm says, "yielded its increase" (Ps 67[66]: [7]6)

... We might say that Mary's Motherhood is a real symbol and sacrament of all this, an event at the same time human and divine. In the passage from the Letter to the Galatians that we have just heard, St Paul

said: "God sent forth his Son, born of woman" (Gal 4: 4). Origen commented: "Note well that he did not say, 'born *by means of* a woman' but 'born *of* a woman'" (*Comment on the Letter to the Galatians*, PG 14, 1298). This acute observation of the great exegete and ecclesiastical writer is important: in fact, if the Son of God had been born only "by means of" a woman, he would not truly have taken on our humanity, something which instead he did by taking flesh "of" Mary. Mary's motherhood, therefore, is true and fully human.

The fundamental truth about Jesus as a divine Person who fully assumed our human nature is condensed in the phrase: "God sent forth his Son born of woman". He is the Son of God, he is generated by God and *at the same time* he is the son of a woman, Mary. He comes from her. He is *of* God and *of* Mary.

For this reason one can and must call the Mother of Jesus the Mother of God. This title, rendered in Greek as *Theotokos*, probably appeared for the first time in the very region of Alexandria, Egypt, precisely where Origen lived in the first half of the third century. However, she was dogmatically defined as such only two centuries later, in 431 by the Council of Ephesus, a city to which I had the joy of going on pilgrimage a month ago during my Apostolic Visit to Turkey.

Indeed, thinking back to that unforgettable visit, how could I fail to express all my filial gratitude to the Holy Mother of God for the special protection which she granted to me in those days of grace? *Theotokos*, Mother of God: every time we recite the *Hail Mary* we address the Virgin with this title, imploring her to pray "for us sinners".

At the end of a year, we feel a special need to call on the motherly intercession of Mary Most Holy for the city of Rome, for Italy, for Europe and for the whole world. Let us entrust to Mary, who is the Mother of Mercy incarnate, particularly those situations to which the Lord's grace alone can bring peace, comfort and justice.

The Virgin heard the Angel announcing her divine Motherhood say to her: "With God nothing will be impossible" (Lk 1: 37). Mary believed and for this reason she is blessed (cf. Lk 1: 45). What is impossible to man becomes possible to the one who believes (cf. Mk 9: 23).

Thus, as 2006 draws to a close and the dawn of 2007 can already be glimpsed, let us ask the Mother of God to obtain for us the gift of a mature faith: a faith that we would like to resemble hers as far as possible, a clear, genuine, humble and at the same time courageous faith, steeped in hope and enthusiasm for the Kingdom of God, a faith devoid of all fatalism and wholly set on cooperating with the divine will in full and joyful obedience and with the absolute certainty that God wants nothing but love and life, always and for everyone. Obtain for us, O Mary, an authentic, pure faith. May you always be thanked and blessed, Holy Mother of God! Amen!

On the Holy Family "Living Image of the Love of God" – Angelus Message on December 31, 2006

On this last Sunday of the year we celebrate the feast of the Holy Family of Nazareth. I joyfully greet all families worldwide, wishing them the peace and love that Jesus has given us, coming among us at Christmas.

In the Gospel we do not find speeches on the family but an event that is worth more than any word: God willed to be born and to grow up in a human family. In this way, he has consecrated the family as the first and ordinary way of his encounter with humanity.

During his life in Nazareth, Jesus honored the Virgin Mary and righteous Joseph, being subject to their authority during the whole time of his infancy and adolescence (Luke 2:51-52). In this way, he made evident the primary value of the family in the education of a person. Jesus was introduced to the religious community by Mary and Joseph, frequenting the synagogue of Nazareth.

Mary and Joseph educated Jesus above all by their example: From his parents, he learned all the beauty of the faith, of the love of God and of his law, as well as the exigencies of justice, which finds its fulfillment in love (Romans 13:10).

From them he learned first of all that one must do God's will, and that the spiritual bond is worth more than that of blood. The Holy Family is truly the "prototype" of every Christian family that, united in the sacrament of marriage and nourished by the Word and the Eucharist, is called to carry out the marvelous vocation and mission of being a living cell not only of society but of the Church, sign and instrument of unity for the whole human race.

Let us now invoke together the protection of Mary Most Holy and of St. Joseph for every family, especially for those in difficulty.