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Pope Benedict XVI

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The Marian Thoughts of Pope Benedict XVI

February 2007



2007

"That God Reign in Our Will, in Our Hearts, in the World" - Papal Address on World Day of Consecrated Life address on February 2, 2007

May Mary, the Tota Pulchra, teach you to transmit to men and women today this divine fascination that must transpire from your words and actions. As I express to you my grateful appreciation for the service you render to the Church, I assure you of my constant remembrance in prayer and I warmly bless you all.

Homily at the Funeral Mass for Cardinal Antonio Maria Javierre Ortas, S.D.B. - February 2, 2007

The coat-of-arms of our late Brother features a boat moored to two pillars; the boat is the Church, the helmsman is the Pope and the two pillars are the Eucharist and Our Lady. As a worthy Son of Don Bosco, the Cardinal was deeply devoted to Mary, whom he loved and venerated with the title "Help of Christians". He sought to imitate the style of discreet and generous service of Our Lady, "Ancilla Domini" [Handmaid of the Lord].

On Pro-life Day in Italy - Angelus Address on February 4, 2007

Let us ask the Lord, through the intercession of Mary Most Holy, that respect will grow for the sacred character of life, that there will be ever greater awareness of genuine family needs, and that the number will increase of those who contribute to bring about in the world the civilization of love.

Message for Twenty-Second World Youth Day - Vatican City, February 5, 2007

By sharing the Eucharistic Bread with our brothers and sisters of the Church community, we feel compelled, like Our Lady with Elizabeth, to render 'in haste' the love of Christ into generous service towards our brothers and sisters. ...

May Mary, the Mother of Christ and of the Church, help you to let that cry ring out everywhere, the cry that has changed the world: 'God is love!' I am together with you all in prayer and extend to you my heartfelt blessing."

Papal Address to Italian Volunteers- February 10, 2007

May the Immaculate Virgin, Mother of Mercy, watch over your confraternity, indeed, watch over each member of the

Misericordie d'Italia. May she help you to fulfill your mission with authentic love, thus contributing to the spread of God's love in the world, the source of life for every human being.

On World Day of the Sick - Angelus Address February 11, 2007

The Church remembers today the first apparition of the Virgin Mary to St. Bernadette, which occurred Feb. 11, 1858, in the grotto of Massabielle in Lourdes, a miraculous event which has made that town, located in the French Pyrenees, a world center of pilgrimages and of intense Marian spirituality.

In that place, now almost 150 years ago, the Virgin's appeal for prayer and penance resounds forcefully, an almost permanent echo of the invitation with which Jesus began his pilgrimage in Galilee: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the Gospel" (Mark 1:15).

That shrine has become, moreover, the object of numerous sick pilgrims, who on listening to Mary Most Holy, receive the encouragement to accept their sufferings and to offer them for the salvation of the world, uniting them to those of Christ crucified.

Because of this link between Lourdes and human suffering, 15 years ago, our beloved John Paul II wished that the World Day of the Sick be celebrated on the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes.

... With the Angelus, prayer, I would now like to commend to the protection of the Immaculate Virgin, the sick and those suffering in body and spirit throughout the world.

Papal Address on the 15th World Day of the Sick at the conclusion of Mass – February 11, 2007

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

It is with great joy that I meet you here in the Vatican Basilica on the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes and the annual World Day of the Sick, at the end of the Eucharistic celebration presided over by Cardinal Camillo Ruini.

Today is the Feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Lourdes, who a little less than 150 years ago appeared to a simple youth, St Bernadette Soubirous, showing herself as the Immaculate Conception.

Also in that apparition the Blessed Mother has shown herself as a tender mother to her children, recalling that the little, the poor are the beloved of God and to them the mystery of the Kingdom of Heaven is revealed.

Dear friends, Mary, who with her faith accompanied her Son beneath the Cross, she who by a mysterious plan was associated to the sufferings of Christ her Son, never tires to exhort us to live and share with serene trust the experience of sorrow and sickness, offering it with faith to the Father, thus completing in our flesh what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ (cf. Col 1:24).

In this regard, I recall the words with which my venerable Predecessor Paul VI concluded the Apostolic Exhortation "Marialis Cultus": "Contemplated in the episodes of the Gospels and in the reality which she already possesses in the City of God, the Blessed Virgin Mary offers a calm vision and a reassuring word to modern man, torn as he often is between anguish and hope, defeated by the sense of his own limitations and assailed by limitless aspirations, troubled in his mind and divided in his heart, uncertain before the riddle of death, oppressed by loneliness while yearning for fellowship, a prey to boredom and disgust. She shows forth the victory of hope over anguish, of fellowship over solitude, of peace over anxiety, of joy and beauty over boredom and disgust, of eternal visions over earthly ones, of life over death" (n. 57).

Dear brothers and sisters, in a short while, this evening, a meaningful candlelight procession will reawaken the atmosphere that is created among pilgrims and those devoted to Lourdes. Our thought goes to the grotto of Massabielle, where human sorrows and hopes, fears and trust, meet.

How many pilgrims, comforted by the gaze of their Mother, find at Lourdes the strength to accomplish more easily the will of God even when it costs renunciation and pain, aware that, as the Apostle Paul affirms, all works to the good of those who love the Lord (cf. Rom 8:28)!

I entrust you all this evening to the Virgin Mary. She, after having known unspeakable suffering, was assumed into Heaven, where she awaits us and where we too hope to be able to share one day the glory of her Divine Son, the joy without end.

Papal Message for Lent 2007 - Vatican City February 13, 2007

"They shall look on Him whom they have pierced" (Jn 19:37). This is the biblical theme that this year

guides our Lenten reflection. Lent is a favourable time to learn to stay with Mary and John, the beloved disciple, close to Him who on the Cross, consummated for all mankind the sacrifice of His life (cf. Jn 19:25). With a more fervent participation let us direct our gaze, therefore, in this time of penance and prayer, at Christ crucified who, dying on Calvary, revealed fully for us the love of God. ... May Mary, Mother of Beautiful Love, guide us in this Lenten journey, a journey of authentic conversion to the love of Christ. I wish you, dear brothers and sisters, a fruitful Lenten journey, imparting with affection to all of you, a special Apostolic Blessing.

Women of the Early Church - General Audience February 14, 2006

More significant for our discussion are the women who played an active role in the context of Jesus' mission. Above all, our thoughts go naturally to the Virgin Mary, who with her faith and maternal endeavor collaborated in a unique way in our redemption, to the point that Elizabeth was able to call her "blessed among women" (Luke 1:42), adding: "Blessed is she who believed" (Luke 1:45).

Becoming a disciple of Christ, Mary manifested at Cana her complete trust in him (cf. John 2:5) and followed him to the foot of the cross, where she received a maternal mission from him for all his disciples of all times, represented by John (cf. John 19:25-27).

In English, he said:

Above all, we remember the Virgin Mary, who cooperated in a unique way in our Redemption. As a faithful disciple of her Son, Mary manifested her complete trust in him at Cana. She received a special mission from him at the foot of the Cross to be the mother of all disciples.

Pope Says Church Is "Alive and Young" – February 16,

2007 Here is a translation of the prayer the Holy Father

composed. Mary, Mother of the "Yes," you have listened to

Jesus,
And know the tone of his voice and the beating of his heart.
Morning Star, speak to us of him,
And tell us about your way following him on the path of faith.

Mary, who lived with Jesus in Nazareth,
Etch your sentiments in our lives,
Your docility, your listening silence,
And make the Word flourish in genuinely free choices.

Mary, speak to us of Jesus, so that the freshness of our
faith, Shines in our eyes and warms the heart of those who
are with us, As you did on visiting Elizabeth,
Who in old age rejoiced with you for the gift of life.

Mary, Virgin of the "Magnificat,"
Help us to take joy to the world and, as at Cana,
Lead every youth, committed to the service of brothers,
To do only what Jesus says.

Mary, look upon the agora [gathering] of youth,
So that it will be fertile terrain of the Italian Church.
Pray that Jesus, dead and risen, is reborn in us,
And transforms us into a night full of light, full of him.

Mary, Virgin of Loreto, Gate of Heaven,
Help us to raise our eyes.
We want to see Jesus, to speak with
him, And to proclaim his love to all.

Pope's Address to His Aides in Latin America – Consistory Hall, February 17, 2007

Dear Brothers, in these days you have reflected and discussed together. Above all you have prayed together. Let us ask the Lord, through the intercession of Mary, to grant that the fruits of this meeting and of the upcoming General Conference of the Latin American Bishops benefit the entire Church.

On the Revolution of Love – Angelus Address February 18, 2007

Let us ask the Virgin Mary, the docile disciple of the Redeemer, to help us to allow ourselves to be conquered without reservations by that love, to learn to love as he loved us, to be merciful as our

heavenly Father is merciful (Luke 6:36).

Papal Address to Confessors of the four Papal Basilicas in Rome – Clementine Hall February 19, 2007.

May they help you from heaven to be able to abundantly dispense the mercy and pardon of Christ. May Mary, Refuge of Sinners, obtain for you the strength, encouragement and hope to generously continue your indispensable mission.

On the 40 Days of Lent – General Audience February 21, 2007

... I wished to underline the immense love God has for us in the message on the occasion of Lent, published a few days ago, so that Christians of the whole community can pause spiritually during the time of Lent, together with Mary and John, the beloved disciple, before him who on the cross consummated for humanity the sacrifice of his life (cf. John 19:25).

... May the Virgin Mary -- who, after having shared the sorrowful passion of her divine Son, experienced the joy of resurrection -- accompany us during this Lent to the mystery of Easter, supreme revelation of the love of God. A good Lent to all!

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

... In my Lenten message this year, I wanted to emphasize God's immense love for us, and to invite all Christians, together with Mary and the Beloved Disciple, to draw near to the Lord, who gave his life for us on the Cross. The Cross -- the definitive revelation of God's love and mercy -- is the only way to enter this mystery of saving love. This Lent, by a more fervent participation in the Eucharist, may we learn to enter more deeply into the Paschal Mystery and to "re-give" Christ's love to others, especially the suffering and those in need.

Session of questions-and-answers with Roman clergy – February 22, 2007

I know that this Marian Shrine [Our Lady of Divine Love] is the one best loved by the people of Rome. During the several visits I paid to the ancient Shrine, I also felt the age-old devotion. One senses the presence of the prayer of generations and one can almost tangibly feel Our Lady's motherly presence. In the encounter with Mary, it is truly possible to experience an encounter with the centuries-old Marian devotion as well as with the desires, needs, sufferings and joys of the generations. Thus, this Shrine, visited by people with their hopes, questions, requests and sufferings, is an essential factor for the Diocese of Rome. We are seeing more and more that Shrines are a source of life and faith in the universal Church, hence, also in the Church of Rome.

In my Country, I had the experience of making pilgrimages on foot to our national Shrine of Altötting. It is an important popular mission. Young people in particular go there. As pilgrims walking for three days, they experience the atmosphere of prayer and an examination of conscience and rediscover, as it were, their Christian awareness of the faith. These three days of pilgrimage on foot are days of confession and prayer, they are a true journey towards Our Lady, towards the family of God and also towards the Eucharist. Pilgrims go on foot to Our Lady, and with Our Lady they go to the Lord, to the Eucharistic encounter, preparing themselves for interior renewal with confession. They live anew the Eucharistic reality of the Lord who gives himself, just as Our Lady gave her own flesh to the Lord, thereby opening the door to the Incarnation. Our Lady gave her flesh for the Incarnation and thereby made possible the Eucharist, where we receive the Flesh that is Bread for the world. In going to the encounter with Our Lady, young people themselves learn to offer their own flesh, their daily life, so that it may be given over to the Lord. And they learn to believe and little by little to say "yes" to the Lord.

I would therefore say, to return to the question, that the Shrine as such, as a place of prayer, confession and the celebration of the Eucharist, provides a great service in the Church today for the Diocese of Rome. I therefore think that the essential service, of which, moreover, you have spoken in practical terms, is precisely that of providing a place of prayer, of sacramental life and of a life of practiced charity.

If I have understood correctly, you spoke of four dimensions of prayer. The first is personal. And here Mary shows us the way. St Luke says twice that the Virgin Mary "kept all these things, pondering them in her heart" (2:19; cf. 2:51). She was a person in conversation with God, with the Word of God and also with the events through which God spoke to her. The Magnificat is a "fabric" woven of words from Sacred Scripture. It shows us how Mary lived in a permanent conversation with the Word of God, and thus, with God himself. Then of course, in life with the Lord, she was also always in conversation with Christ, with the Son of God and with the Trinitarian God. Therefore, let us learn from Mary and speak personally with the Lord, pondering and preserving God's words in our lives and hearts so that they may become true food for

each one of us. Thus, Mary guides us at a school of prayer in personal and profound contact with God.

On this journey, we are naturally accompanied by the saints. Despite their many problems, they lived and were true and living "interpretations" of Sacred Scripture. Each person has his saint from whom he can best learn what living as a Christian means. There are the saints of our time in particular, and of course there is always Mary, who remains the Mother of the Word. Rediscovering Mary helps us to make progress as Christians and to come to know the Son.

On Contemplating Christ Crucified – *Angelus Address February 25, 2007*

The beloved disciple, present with Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and the other women on Calvary, was an eyewitness of the thrust of the spear which pierced Christ's side, so that blood and water came out (cf. John 19:31-34). This gesture of an unknown Roman soldier, destined to be lost in oblivion, was imprinted on the eyes and heart of the apostle, who recounted it in his Gospel. In the course of the centuries, how many conversions have taken place precisely thanks to the eloquent message of love that he receives who contemplates Jesus crucified!

Let us pray to the Virgin Mary, whose soul was pierced next to her Son's cross, to obtain for us the gift of a firm faith. That, guiding us on our Lenten journey, she may help us leave everything that impedes us from listening to Christ and his word of salvation.

In particular, entrust to the Virgin Mary the week of Spiritual Exercises that will begin this afternoon in the Vatican, and in which I and my collaborators of the Roman Curia will participate.