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Pope Benedict XVI

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March 1 to March 26, 2006



2006

March 4, 2006: Excerpt given to Italian Christian Executives in Paul VI Hall

May the Virgin Mary also always help you, together with the great witnesses of social charity who have spread the Gospel of charity with their teaching and action.

March 1, 2006: Ash Wednesday

Thank you! May Mary, Mother of the Redeemer, who is teacher of listening and faithful adherence to God, accompany us on this journey of penance. Purified and renewed in mind and spirit, may the Virgin Mary help us to celebrate the great mystery of Christ's Pasch. With these sentiments I wish all a good and fruitful Lent.

March 5, 2006: St. Peter's Square

Dear brothers and sisters, while I ask you that you support me with your prayers, I assure you of my prayer before the Lord so that, for all Christians, Lent will be an occasion of conversion and of a more courageous impulse to holiness. Let us invoke for this reason the maternal intercession of the Virgin Mary. [After praying the Angelus, the Holy Father addressed this greeting to pilgrims:]

Next Saturday, March 11, at 5 p.m. in the Paul VI Auditorium, a Marian vigil will be held, organized by university students of Rome. Also participating, thanks to radio and television connections, will be students of other European countries and Africa. It will be a propitious occasion to pray to the Holy Virgin to open new paths of cooperation between the peoples of Europe and Africa.

March 11, 2006: Bring the World the Joyful News of Christ

This morning, the Pope and the Roman Curia concluded their spiritual exercises, which ... were held in the Vatican's "*Redemptoris Mater*" Chapel.

... What the preacher did, the Pope said, was to guide us "on a Marian journey, a journey that calls us to become part of the Word of God, to place our lives within the Word of God and so allow our being to be permeated by this Word, that we may then become witnesses to the living Word of Christ Himself in our time."

March 11, 2006: Paul VI Audience Hall

Dear Young University Students,

At the end of the Prayer of the Holy Rosary, with great joy I address my cordial greetings to you all... This Marian Vigil, dear to Pope John Paul II, builds bridges of brotherhood between the young university students of Europe and this evening extends them to the interior of the great Continent of Africa, so that communion will grow among the new generations and the civilization of love will be spread.

...Dear young university students who have gathered in Madrid and Salamanca, may the Virgin Mary help you to witness to God's love among your friends and companions.

My dear friends gathered in Nairobi, Owerri and Dublin, may Mary, Seat of Wisdom, teach you always to integrate truth and love in your studies and in your lives!

Dear young friends in Munich and Bonn, draw divine Love from Christ's Heart and express it in concrete acts of service to your brothers and sisters. May the Virgin Mary accompany you and help you in this!

Dear students of Fribourg and Abidjan, under the motherly guidance of Mary, always follow Jesus on the path of love, making a generous gift of your lives.

Dear friends in St Petersburg, may the Holy Mother of God accompany you on your journey of formation, so that you can embark on your professional activity motivated by Christian love.

... May Mary, Seat of Wisdom, obtain for you this Lent a profound spiritual renewal, so that you can always live and offer your studies for the glory of God. To this end I assure you that I will continue to remember you in my prayers, as I cordially bless all of you and your relatives. Rosary with University Students.

March 11, 2006: Excerpt given at the end of the Roman Cura's Spiritual

In all these days, my gaze has necessarily focused on this depiction of the Annunciation of Mary. What fascinated me is this: The Archangel Gabriel holds a scroll in his hand, which I believe is the symbol of Scripture, of the Word of God. And Mary is kneeling within the scroll; that is, she lives her whole life in the Word of God. It is as though she were steeped in the Word. Thus, all her thoughts, her will and her actions are imbued with and formed by the Word. Since she herself dwells in the Word, she can also become the new "Dwelling Place" of the Word in the world.

Silently, with these points alone, Your Eminence, you have guided us on a Marian path. This Marian route calls us to be integrated into the Word of God, to place our lives within the Word of God and thereby let our being be imbued with this Word, so that we may be witnesses in our time of the living Word, of Christ himself.

"After Mary, the pure reflection of the light of Christ, the apostles, through their word and testimony, hand on to us the truth of Christ. Their mission is not isolated. It is framed within the mystery of communion and involves all of God's People and is brought about in stages from the old to the new covenant."

March 15, 2006: Church, Presence of Christ Among Men

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March 26, 2006

In a certain sense, we relived the reality of the first Christian community, gathered around Mary, Mother of Jesus, and Peter, to

receive the gift of the Spirit and be committed to spread the Gospel in the whole world. ... The Church advances in history and spreads on earth accompanied by Mary, Queen of the Apostles. As in the cenacle, the Holy Virgin is always for Christians the living memory of Jesus. She animates their prayer and sustains their hope. We ask her to guide us in our daily journey and to protect with special predilection those Christian communities that are going through conditions of particular difficulty and suffering.

March 19, 2006: St. Peter's Basilica

Together with Mary, his Spouse, may St. Joseph watch over all workers and obtain serenity and peace for families and for the whole of humanity.

March 25, 2006: Pope's Homily at Mass With New Cardinals

For me it is a source of great joy to preside at this concelebration with the new cardinals after yesterday's consistory, and I consider it providential that it should take place on the liturgical solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord. In the incarnation of the Son of God, in fact, we recognize the origins of the Church. Everything began from there. Every historical realization of the Church and every one of her institutions must be shaped by that primordial wellspring.

They must be shaped by Christ, the incarnate word of God. It is he that we are constantly celebrating: Emmanuel, God-with-us, through whom the saving will of God the Father has been accomplished. And yet -- today of all days we contemplate this aspect of the mystery -- the divine wellspring flows through a privileged channel: the Virgin Mary. St. Bernard speaks of this using the eloquent image of "*aquaeductus*" (cf. "*Sermo in Nativitate B.V. Mariae*": PL 183, 437-448). In celebrating the incarnation of the Son, therefore, we cannot fail to honor his mother.

The angel's proclamation was addressed to her; she accepted it, and when she responded from the depths of her heart: "Here I am ... let it be done to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38), the eternal Word began to exist as a human being in time.

From generation to generation, the wonder evoked by this ineffable mystery never ceases. St. Augustine imagines a dialogue between himself and the angel of the Annunciation, in which he asks: "Tell me, O Angel, why did this happen in Mary?" The answer, says the messenger, is contained in the very words of the greeting: "Hail, full of grace" (cf. "*Sermo*" 291:6). In fact, the angel, "appearing to her," does not call her by her earthly name, Mary, but by her divine name, as she has always been seen and characterized by God: "Full of grace -- '*gratia plena*,'" which in the original Greek is "beloved" (cf. Luke 1:28). Origen observes that no such title had ever been given to a human

being, and that it is unparalleled in all of sacred Scripture (cf. "In Lucam" 6:7).

It is a title expressed in passive form, but this "passivity" of Mary, who has always been and is for ever "loved" by the Lord, implies her free consent, her personal and original response: In being loved, Mary is fully active, because she accepts with personal generosity the wave of God's love poured out upon her. In this too, she is the perfect disciple of her Son, who realizes the fullness of his freedom through obedience to the Father.

In the second reading, we heard the wonderful passage in which the author of the Letter to the Hebrews interprets Psalm 39 in the light of Christ's incarnation: "When Christ came into the world, he said: ... 'Here I am, I have come to do your will, O God'" (Hebrews 10:5-7). Before the mystery of these two "Here I am" statements from Christ and from the Virgin, each of which is reflected in the other, forming a single Amen to God's loving will, we are filled with wonder and thanksgiving, and we bow down in adoration.

What a great gift, dear brothers, to be able to conduct this evocative celebration on the solemnity of the Lord's Annunciation! What an abundance of light we can draw from this mystery for our lives as ministers of the Church! You above all, dear new cardinals, what great sustenance you can receive for your mission as the eminent "Senate" of Peter's Successor! This providential circumstance helps us to consider today's event, which emphasizes the Petrine principle of the Church, in the light of the other principle, the Marian one, which is even more fundamental. The importance of the Marian principle in the Church was particularly highlighted, after the council, by my beloved predecessor Pope John Paul II, in harmony with his motto "Totus tuus."

In his spirituality and in his tireless ministry, the presence of Mary as Mother and Queen of the Church was made manifest to the eyes of all. More than ever he adverted to her maternal presence in the assassination attempt of May 13, 1981, in St. Peter's Square. In memory of that tragic event, he had a mosaic of the Virgin placed high up in the Apostolic Palace, looking down over St. Peter's Square, so as to accompany the key moments and the daily unfolding of his long reign. It is just one year since his pontificate entered its final phase, full of suffering and yet triumphant and truly paschal. The icon of the Annunciation, more than any other, helps us to see clearly how everything in the Church goes back to that mystery of Mary's acceptance of the divine Word, by which, through the action of the Holy Spirit, the covenant between God and humanity was perfectly sealed.

Everything in the Church, every institution and ministry, including that of Peter and his successors, is "included" under the Virgin's mantle, within the grace-filled horizon of her "yes" to God's will. This link with Mary naturally evokes a strong affective resonance in all of us, but first of all it has an objective value. Between Mary and the Church there is

indeed a connatural relationship that was strongly emphasized by the Second Vatican Council in its felicitous decision to place the treatment of the Blessed Virgin at the conclusion of the constitution on the Church, "*Lumen Gentium*."

The theme of the relationship between the Petrine principle and the Marian principle is also found in the symbol of the ring which I am about to consign to you. The ring is always a nuptial sign. Almost all of you have already received one, on the day of your episcopal ordination, as an expression of your fidelity and your commitment to watch over the holy Church, the bride of Christ (cf. "Rite of Ordination of Bishops"). The ring which I confer upon you today, proper to the cardinalatial dignity, is intended to confirm and strengthen that commitment, arising once more from a nuptial gift, a reminder to you that first and foremost you are intimately united with Christ so as to accomplish your mission as bridegrooms of the Church.

May your acceptance of the ring be for you a renewal of your "yes," your "here I am," addressed both to the Lord Jesus who chose you and constituted you, and to his holy Church, which you are called to serve with the love of a spouse. So the two dimensions of the Church, Marian and Petrine, come together in the supreme value of "charity," which constitutes the fulfillment of each. As St. Paul says, charity is the "greatest" charism, the "most excellent way" (1 Corinthians 12:31; 13:13).

Everything in this world will pass away. In eternity only love will remain. For this reason, my Brothers, taking the opportunity offered by this favorable time of Lent, let us commit ourselves to ensure that everything in our personal lives, and in the ecclesial activity in which we are engaged, is inspired by charity and leads to charity. In this respect too, we are enlightened by the mystery that we are celebrating today. Indeed, the first thing that Mary did after receiving the Angel's message was to go "in haste" to the house of her cousin Elizabeth in order to be of service to her (cf. Luke 1:39).

The Virgin's initiative was one of genuine charity, it was humble and courageous, motivated by faith in God's word and the inner promptings of the Holy Spirit. Those who love forget about themselves and place themselves at the service of their neighbor.

Here we have the image and model of the Church! Every ecclesial community, like the Mother of Christ, is called to accept with total generosity the mystery of God who comes to dwell within her and guides her steps in the ways of love. This is the path along which I chose to launch my pontificate, inviting everyone, with my first encyclical, to build up the Church in charity as a "community of love" (cf. "*Deus Caritas Est*," Part 2).

In pursuing this objective, venerable Brother Cardinals, your spiritual closeness and active assistance is a great support and comfort to me. For this I thank you, and at the same time I invite all of you, priests, deacons, religious and lay faithful, to join together in invoking the Holy Spirit, praying that the College of Cardinals may be ever more ardent in pastoral charity, so as to help the whole Church to radiate Christ's love in the world, to the praise and glory of the Most Holy Trinity. Amen!