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Pope Benedict XVI

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December 2007



Pope's Address to Catholic NGOs – Address to participants in the Forum of Catholic-Inspired Nongovernmental Organizations on December 1, 2007

... Assuring you of a special remembrance in my prayers, I invoke upon you and the organizations you represent, the maternal protection of Mary, Queen of the World. ...

Papal Homily at a Roman Hospital – December 2, 2007

... Comforted by these words, let us continue the Eucharistic Celebration, invoking upon the sick, their relatives and all who work in this hospital and in the entire Order of the Knights of Malta the motherly protection of Mary, the Virgin of waiting and hope, as also of the joy which already exists in this world, because when we feel the closeness of the living Christ, there the remedy to suffering and his joy is already present. Amen.

On Hope – Angelus Address on December 2, 2007

... It is in Christ that we hope and it is him that we await! With Mary, his mother, the Church goes out to meet the Bridegroom: She does this with works of charity, because hope, like faith, is demonstrated in love. ...

Benedict XVI's Address to Korean Bishops and the Apostolic Prefect of Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, in Rome for their five-yearly visit.– December 3, 2007

... With fraternal affection I commend you to the intercession of Mary, model of all disciples, and I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing to you and the priests, religious, and lay faithful of your Dioceses and Prefecture.

On St. Chromatius of Aquileia – December 5, 2007

... The strong emphasis on Christ's human nature led Chromatius to talk about the Virgin Mary. His doctrine about Mary is clear and precise. To him we owe some evocative descriptions of the Holy Virgin: Mary is "the evangelical virgin able of receiving God"; she is "the immaculate and inviolate lamb" who gave birth to the "lamb swaddled in purple" (cf. Sermo XXIII, 3: Writers of the Santambrosian area 3/1, p. 134).

The bishop of Aquileia often associated the Virgin to the Church: both, in fact, are "virgin" and "mother." Chromatius' ecclesiology was especially developed in his commentaries on the Gospel of Matthew.

Some recurring concepts are: the Church is one and only; it was born from the blood of Christ; it is a precious garment woven by the Holy Spirit; the Church is the place which proclaims that Christ was born of the Virgin, and where brotherhood and harmony flourish. ...

In English the pope said:

His teaching emphasized the mystery of the Blessed Trinity, the work of the Holy Spirit, the divinity and integral humanity of Christ, the dignity of the Virgin Mary and the unity of the Church. In a lively Latin, filled with striking imagery, he proclaimed the truths of the faith, sustained his flock in hope amid the uncertainties of the times, and, above all, taught them to pray with confidence in the Lord's victory over evil and his unfailing mercy toward his holy ones.

I am pleased to welcome the Marist and **Marianist Brothers** visiting Rome for a program of spiritual renewal. ...

The Immaculate Conception – Angelus Address on December 8, 2007

Dear Brothers and Sisters!

The star of Mary Immaculate shines down on the path of Advent. She is the "sign of sure hope and solace to the people of God during its sojourn on earth" (LG 68). To reach Jesus, the true light, the sun that has dissipated all the darkness of history, we need human persons near to us who reflect Christ's light and thus illuminate the road to be taken. What person is more luminous than Mary? Who can be for us better than her the star of hope, the sunrise that proclaims the day of salvation (cf. "Spe Salvi" 49)?

For this reason the liturgy brings us to celebrate today, as we approach Christmas, the solemn feast of the Immaculate Conception of Mary: the mystery of God's grace overshadowed from the first moment of her existence this creature who was destined to be the Mother of the Redeemer, preserving her from the contagion of original sin. Gazing upon her, we recognize the height and beauty of God's project for every man: becoming holy and immaculate in love (cf. Eph 1:4), in the image of our Creator.

What a great gift to have Mary Immaculate as mother! A mother shining with beauty, transparent to God's love. I think of the young people of today, growing up in an environment saturated by messages that propose false models of happiness. These young men and women run the risk of losing hope because they often seem orphans of true love, the love that fills life with meaning and joy. This was a theme dear to my venerable predecessor, Pope John Paul II, who many times proposed Mary as "Mother of Love" to the young people of our time.

Not a few experiences tell us that young people, adolescents and even children are easy victims of the corruption of love, deceived by unscrupulous adults, who, lying to them and to themselves, draw them into the dead ends of consumerism. Even the most sacred realities, such as the human body, temple of the God of love and life, become objects of consumption; and this happens earlier and earlier, already in pre-adolescence. How sad it is when the young lose wonder, the enchantment of the best sentiments, the value of respect for the body, manifestation of the person and his inscrutable mystery!

Mary, the immaculate one, whom we contemplate in her beauty and holiness, calls us back to all this. On the cross, Jesus entrusts her to John and to all the disciples (cf. Jn 19:27), and from that moment she comes Mother for all humanity, Mother of Hope. We address our prayer to her with faith as we are in our heart on spiritual pilgrimage to Lourdes, where on this very day a special jubilee year has begun on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of Mary's appearances in the grotto of Massabielle. Mary Immaculate, "star of the sea, shine upon us and guide us on our way!" (Spe Salvi 50).

Papal Address to Rome's University Students – Saint Peter's Basilica on December 13, 2007

... I am very pleased to meet so many of you at this traditional encounter close to the Birth of Christ. ... I would like to reserve a special greeting to the young people of the Albanian delegation who have brought back to Rome the icon of Mary *Sedes Sapientiae*, and to those of the Romanian delegation who will receive the image of Mary this evening so that it may be a "pilgrim" of peace and hope in their country.

... I would like to say: direct your gaze to the Virgin Mary and from her "yes", learn also to pronounce your "yes" to the divine call. The Holy Spirit enters into our lives in the measure in which we open our hearts with our "yes": the fuller the "yes", the fuller is the gift of his presence. To understand better, we can refer to a very simple reality: light. If a window's shutters are hermetically sealed, although the light is shining it cannot illuminate the house. If there is a little fissure, a ray of light enters; if the shutters are opened a little more, the room begins to lighten up, but only when completely opened do the sun's rays illuminate and warm the environment. Dear friends, Mary is greeted by the Angel as "full of grace", which means exactly this: her heart and her life are totally open to God, and this is why she is completely pervaded by his grace. May she help you to make yourselves a free and full "yes" to God, so that you can be renewed, indeed, transformed by the light and joy of the Holy Spirit.

... May the light of Christ, which we invoke through the intercession of Mary, Star of Hope, and of the holy virgin and martyr Lucy, whose memory we recall today, always enlighten your life. With these wishes, I whole-heartedly wish you and your relatives a Christmas rich in grace and peace, while I warmly impart the Apostolic Blessing to all.

On Gaudete Sunday - Angelus Address on December 16, 2007

... Dear brothers and sisters, even at Christmastime it is possible to take the wrong road, to exchange the true feast for that one that does not open the heart to Christ. May the Virgin Mary help all Christians, and men in search of God, to reach Bethlehem, to meet the Child who is born for us, for the salvation and happiness of all men.

On Evangelization and Christmas – Angelus Address on December 23, 2007

... Mary is the incomparable model of evangelization, she who did not communicate an idea to the world but rather Jesus, the incarnate Word. Let us invoke her with confidence so that also the Church in our time proclaims Christ the Savior. ...

Benedict XVI's Midnight Mass Homily – St. Peter's Basilica on December 24, 2007

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

"The time came for Mary to be delivered. And she gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn" (*Lk 2:6f.*). These words touch our hearts every time we hear them. This was the moment that the angel had foretold at Nazareth: "you will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High" (*Lk 1:31*). This was the moment that Israel had been awaiting for centuries, through many dark hours - the moment that all mankind was somehow awaiting, in terms as yet ill-defined: when God would take care of us, when he would step outside his concealment, when the world would be saved and God would renew all things. We can imagine the kind of interior preparation, the kind of love with which Mary approached that hour. The brief phrase: "She wrapped him in swaddling clothes" allows us to glimpse something of the holy joy and the silent zeal of that preparation. The swaddling clothes were ready, so that the child could be given a fitting welcome. Yet there is no room at the inn. ... Thank God, this detail is not the only one, nor the last one that we find in the Gospel. Just as in *Luke* we encounter the maternal love of Mary and the fidelity of Saint Joseph, the vigilance of the shepherds and their great joy, just as in *Matthew* we encounter the visit of the wise men, come from afar, so too *John* says to us: "To all who received him, he gave power to become children of God" (*Jn 1:12*). There are those who receive him, and thus, beginning with the stable, with the outside, there grows silently the new house, the new city, the new world. ...

On the Holy Family – Angelus Address on December 30, 2007

Today we celebrate the feast of the Holy Family. Following the narration of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, we stop to look at Jesus, Mary and Joseph, we look with adoration on the mystery of a God that chose to be born of a woman, the holy Virgin, and to enter this world by a path common to all men. In this way he sanctified the reality of the family, filling it with divine grace and fully revealing his vocation and mission. ...

Upon contemplating the mystery of the Son of God that came into the world surrounded by the affection of Mary and Joseph, I invite all Christian families to experience the loving presence of the Lord in their lives. ...

In the hands of Mary, "who with her 'yes' opened the door of our world to God" ("*Spe Salvi*"), I place the results of this celebration. Thank you very much and happy holidays. ...

After the Angelus, the Pope greeted the people in several languages. In English, he said:]

I offer a warm welcome to the English-speaking visitors gathered for this Angelus prayer. Today, in the heart of the Christmas season, the Church celebrates the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. May the mystery of God's love, made incarnate in the Child Jesus and reflected in the home of Mary and Joseph in Nazareth, dwell in your hearts and in your families throughout the coming year. Upon all of you I invoke an abundance of Christmas joy and peace!

Christ Is Our Trustworthy Hope - Papal Homily at Vespers on December 31, 2007

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

As this year is also ending, we are gathered in the Vatican Basilica to celebrate First Vespers of the Solemnity of Mary Most Holy, Mother of God. The liturgy makes this important Marian feast coincide with the end and the beginning of the solar year. Our hymn of gratitude for 2007 which is drawing to a close and for 2008 which we are already glimpsing is therefore combined with contemplation of the mystery of the divine motherhood. ...

In the short reading from the Letter to the Galatians that we have just heard, speaking of the liberation of man brought about by God with the mystery of the Incarnation, St Paul very discreetly mentions the One through whom the Son of God entered the world: "when the time had fully come", he wrote, "God sent forth his Son, born of woman" (Galatians 4: 4). The Church contemplates in the "woman" the features of Mary of Nazareth, a unique woman because she was called to carry out a mission that brought her into very close contact with Christ: indeed, it was an absolutely unique relationship, because Mary is Mother of the Savior. Just as obviously, however, we can and must affirm that she is our Mother because, by living her very special maternal relationship with the Son, she shared in his mission for us and for the salvation of all people. In contemplating her, the Church makes out her own features: Mary lives faith and charity; Mary is also a creature saved by the one Savior; Mary collaborates in the initiative of the salvation of all humanity. Thus, Mary constitutes for the Church her truest image: she in whom the Ecclesial Community must continually discover the authentic sense of its own vocation and its own mystery. ...

This is my wish for everyone on the eve of a New Year, a wish that I entrust to the motherly intercession of Mary, Mother of God and Star of Hope. Amen!