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Pope Benedict XVI

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The Marian Thoughts of Pope Benedict XVI

June 2008



On the Call of Matthew – Angelus Address June 8, 2008

Turning now to the Virgin Mary, let us ask through her intercession always to live in the joy of the Christian experience. May the Mother of Mercy, the Madonna, awaken in us the sentiments of filial abandonment to God, who is infinite mercy; may she help us to make our own the prayer that St. Augustine formulates in a famous passage of the "Confessions": "Have mercy on me, Lord! See, I do not hide my wounds: You are my doctor, I am the sick one; you are merciful, I am miserable. All of my hope is placed in your great mercy" (X, 28, 39; 29, 40).

Letter to the VII General Assembly of the Catholic Biblical Federation, underway until July 3 in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania. - June 12, 2008

All Christians are called to imitate the openness of Mary who received the Word of God "in her heart and in her body and gave Life to the world" (Lumen Gentium, 53). May the peoples of Africa receive this Word as the life-giving source of reconciliation and justice, and especially of the true peace that comes only from the Risen Lord. Commending to the same Virgin Mary, the Seat of Wisdom, all those gathered for this General Assembly, I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing.

"Mary Shines on the Sea of Life and History as a Star of Hope" - Homily at Shrine of Mary "De Finibus Terrae," in Santa Maria di Leuca on June 14

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

My Visit in Apulia ... begins as a Marian pilgrimage, on this extreme tip of Italy and Europe, at the Shrine of St Mary *de finibus terrae*. In this place, so important historically for devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, I wanted the liturgy to be dedicated to her, Star of the Sea and Star of Hope. "*Ave, maris stella, / Dei Mater alma, / atque semper virgo, / felix caeli porta!*". The words of this ancient hymn are a greeting which in some way echoes that of the Angel at Nazareth. All Marian titles, in fact, have as it were budded and blossomed from that first name with which the heavenly messenger addressed

the Virgin: "Hail, full of grace" (Lk 1: 28). We heard it in St Luke's Gospel, most appropriately because this Shrine - as the memorial tablet above the central door of the atrium attests - is called after the Most Holy Virgin of the "Annunciation". When God called Mary "full of grace" the hope of salvation for the human race was enkindled: a daughter of our people found grace in the Lord's eyes, he chose her as Mother of the Redeemer. In the simplicity of Mary's home, in a poor village of Galilee, the solemn prophecy of salvation began to be fulfilled: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel" (Gn 3: 15). Therefore the Christian people have made their own the canticle of praise that the Jews raised to Judith and that just a little while ago we prayed as a Responsorial Psalm: "O daughter, you are blessed by the Most High God above all women on earth" (Jdt 13: 18). Without violence but with the meek courage of her "yes", the Virgin freed us, not from an earthly enemy but from the ancient adversary, by giving a human body to the One who was to crush his head once and for all.

This is why Mary shines on the sea of life and history as a Star of Hope. She does not shine with her own light, but reflects the light of Christ, the Sun who appeared on humanity's horizon so that in following the Star of Mary we can steer ourselves on the journey and keep on the route towards Christ, especially in dark and stormy moments. The Apostle Peter was well acquainted with this experience because he had lived it in the first person. I have wished to recall the story of St Peter because I know that this place and your whole Church have a special link with the Prince of the Apostles. Tradition credits him with the first proclamation of the Gospel in this land, as your Bishop recalled at the outset.

Peter's faith and Mary's faith are combined at this Shrine. Here one can draw from the double principle of the Christian experience: Marian and Petrine. Both, together, help us, dear brothers and sisters, to "start afresh from Christ", to renew your faith so that it may respond to the demands of our time. Mary teaches you to continue ceaselessly to listen to the Lord in the silence of prayer, to welcome his word with generous openness and the deep desire to offer yourselves, your actual lives, to God so that by the power of the Holy Spirit his eternal Word may "become flesh" once again today, in our history. Mary will help you to follow Jesus faithfully and to unite yourselves to him in the Sacrificial offering, to carry in your hearts the joy of the Resurrection and to live in constant docility to the Spirit of Pentecost.

Lastly, my thoughts return to the Most Holy Virgin. From this Shrine of St Mary *de finibus terrae* I would like to go on a spiritual pilgrimage to the various Marian Shrines in the Salento, true gems set in this peninsula, set like a bridge over the sea. The Marian piety of the populations was formed under the wonderful influence of the Basilian devotion to the *Theotokos*, a devotion cultivated later by the sons of St Benedict, St Dominic and St Francis, and expressed in the most beautiful churches and simple holy chapels that are cared for and preserved as signs of the rich religious and civil heritage of your people. Let us therefore turn once again to you, Virgin Mary, who stood unwavering at the foot of your Son's Cross. You are a model of faith and hope in the power of truth and goodness. With the words of the ancient hymn we invoke you: "Break the fetters of the oppressed, / give light to the blind, / cast all evil from us, / beseech our every good". And, extending our gaze to the horizon where heaven and sea meet, we want to entrust to you the peoples who look out on the Mediterranean and those of the whole world, invoking development and peace for all: "Grant us peace in our day, / watch over our way, / grant that we may see your Son, / in the fullness of joy in heaven". Amen.

Homily at the St Apollinaris Wharf, Port of Brindisi – June 15, 2008

I entrust you all to the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of Hope and Star of Evangelization. May the Blessed Virgin help you to remain in the love of Christ, so that you may bear abundant fruit for the glory of God the Father and the salvation of the world. Amen.

On the Way of Peace – Angelus Address June 15, 2008 in Brindisi

From this limb of Europe that stretches out into the Mediterranean, between East and West, we turn once again to Mary, Mother who "shows us the way" -- "Odegitria" -- giving us Jesus, the way of peace.

We invoke her with all the titles with which she is venerated in the shrines of Puglia, and especially here, in this ancient port, we pray to her as "port of salvation" for every man and for all of humanity.

May her maternal protection always defend your city and region, Italy, Europe and the whole world against the tempests that threaten the faith and true values; may she permit the young generations to take to the sea without fear, to face the voyage of life with Christian hope. Mary, port of salvation, pray for us! May her maternal protection always defend your city and region, Italy, Europe and the whole world against the tempests that threaten the faith and true values; may she permit the young generations to take to the sea without fear, to face the voyage of life with Christian hope. Mary, port of salvation, pray for us!

Benedict XVI's Address to Pakistani Bishops - June 19, 2008

Dear Brother Bishops,

May you support one another in prayer and effective collaboration as you face the difficult tasks that lie ahead. Invoking upon you and your priests, religious and lay faithful the maternal protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary, I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing as a pledge of joy and peace in the Lord Jesus.

On Being Unafraid - Angelus Address June 22, 2008

I invite you, then, dear brothers and sisters, to prepare yourselves to celebrate with faith this Pauline Year, which, if it may please God, I will solemnly open next Saturday evening at 6 p.m. in the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls, with the first vespers for the Solemnity of Sts. Peter and Paul. From this moment we entrust this great ecclesial initiative to the intercession of St. Paul and Mary most holy, Queen of the Apostles and Mother of Christ, source of our joy and our peace.

Homily via satellite at the closing Mass of the forty-ninth International Eucharistic Congress held in Quebec - June 23, 2008

May you, in the image of the Virgin Mary, be open to the work of God in you. Entrusting you to the intercession of Our Lady, of Saint Anne, patroness of Quebec, and of all the saints of your land, I impart to all of you an affectionate Apostolic Blessing, as well as to all the persons present, who have come from different countries of the world.

On Career of Cardinal Ruini – June 27, 2008

Dear cardinals,

May God fill you with an abundance of his gifts, recompense him who retires and sustain him who takes his place. May he multiply in all thanksgiving for his infinite goodness and always grant each one the joy of serving Christ by working humbly for his Church. May the Virgin Mary, "Salus Populi Romani," watch over us from heaven and accompany us. Invoking her intercession, I impart from my heart to all of you here present and to the entire city of Rome the apostolic blessing.

On the Pauline Year – Angelus Address June 29, 2008

The Pauline Year, evangelization, communion in the Church and full unity among Christians: Let us now pray for these great intentions, entrusting them to the celestial intercession of Mary Most Holy, Mother of the Church and Queen of the Apostles.