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Pope Benedict XVI

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The Marian Thoughts of Pope Benedict XVI

July 2008



"The Holy Spirit Infuses the Capacity to Be Witnesses of Jesus" – Angelus Address on July 6, 2008 at Castel Gandolfo

Along with the cross, the icon of the Virgin Mary accompanies the World Youth Days. We entrust to her maternal protection this trip to Australia and the meeting with young people in Sydney. Moreover, on this first Sunday of July, I wish to invoke the intercession of Mary so that the summer season might offer everyone the occasion for a time of rest and physical and spiritual renewal.

Welcome to Youth - Barangaroo East Darling Harbor in Sydney, July 17, 2008

Almost two thousand years ago, the Apostles, gathered in the upper room together with Mary and some faithful women, were filled with the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 1:14; 2:4). At that extraordinary moment, which gave birth to the Church, the confusion and fear that had gripped Christ's disciples were transformed into a vigorous conviction and sense of purpose.

Homily at Mass with Australian Clergy and young Members of the consecrated Life in St. Mary's Cathedral, Sydney on July 19, 2008

Dear friends, let me conclude these reflections by drawing your attention to the great stained glass window in the chancel of this cathedral. There Our Lady, Queen of Heaven, is represented enthroned in majesty beside her divine Son. The artist has represented Mary, as the new Eve, offering an apple to Christ, the new Adam. This gesture symbolizes her reversal of our first parents' disobedience, the rich fruit which God's grace bore in her own life, and the first fruits of that redeemed and glorified humanity which she has preceded into the glory of heaven. Let us ask Mary, Help of Christians, to sustain the Church in Australia in fidelity to that grace by which the Crucified Lord even now "draws to himself" all creation and every human heart (cf. Jn 12:32).

Address at Youth Day Vigil at the Randwick Racecourse in Sydney – July 19, 2008

Once again this evening we have heard Christ's great promise – "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you." And we have heard his summons – "be my witnesses throughout the world" – (Acts 1:8). These were the very last words which Jesus spoke before his Ascension into heaven. How the Apostles felt upon hearing them, we can only imagine. But we do know that their deep love for Jesus, and their trust in his word, prompted them to gather and to wait; to wait not aimlessly, but together, united in prayer, with the women and Mary in the Upper Room (cf. Acts 1:14). Tonight, we do the same. Gathered before our much-travelled Cross and the icon of Mary, and under the magnificent constellation of the Southern Cross, we pray.

Homily at Closing Mass of the Twenty-third World Youth Day in Sydney, Australia on July 20, 2008

In today's Gospel, Jesus proclaims that a new age has begun, in which the Holy Spirit will be poured out upon all humanity (cf. Lk 4:21). He himself, conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, came among us to bring us that Spirit.

Through the loving intercession of Mary, Mother of the Church, may this Twenty-third World Youth Day be experienced as a new Upper Room, from which all of us, burning with the fire and love of the Holy Spirit, go forth to proclaim the Risen Christ and to draw every heart to him! Amen.

"God's Proposal Brought Mary's Yes" - Angelus Address after the Closing Mass of World Youth Day – Sydney, July 20, 2008

Dear young friends, in the beautiful prayer that we are about to recite, we reflect on Mary as a young woman, receiving the Lord's summons to dedicate her life to him in a very particular way, a way that would involve the generous gift of herself, her womanhood, her motherhood. Imagine how she must have felt. She was filled with apprehension, utterly overwhelmed at the prospect that lay before her. The angel understood her anxiety and immediately sought to reassure her. "Do not be afraid, Mary The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you" (Lk 1:30, 35). It was the Spirit who gave her the strength and courage to respond to the Lord's call. It was the Spirit who helped her to understand the great mystery that was to be accomplished through her. It was the Spirit who enfolded her with his love and enabled her to conceive the Son of God in her womb.

This scene is perhaps the pivotal moment in the history of God's relationship with his people. During the Old Testament, God revealed himself partially, gradually, as we all do in our personal relationships. It took time for the chosen people to develop their relationship with God. The Covenant with Israel was like a period of courtship, a long engagement. Then came the definitive moment, the moment of marriage, the establishment of a new and everlasting covenant. As Mary stood before the Lord, she represented the whole of humanity. In the angel's message, it was as if God made a marriage proposal to the human race. And in our name, Mary said yes.

In fairy tales, the story ends there, and all "live happily ever after." In real life it is not so simple. For Mary there were many struggles ahead, as she lived out the consequences of the "yes" that she had given to the Lord. Simeon prophesied that a sword would pierce her heart. When Jesus was twelve years old, she experienced every parent's worst nightmare when, for three days, the child went missing. And after his public ministry, she suffered the agony of witnessing his crucifixion and death. Throughout her trials she remained faithful to her promise, sustained by the Spirit of fortitude. And she was gloriously rewarded.

Dear young people, we too must remain faithful to the "yes" that we have given to the Lord's offer of friendship. We know that he will never abandon us. We know that he will always sustain us through the gifts of the Spirit. Mary accepted the Lord's "proposal" in our name. So let us turn to her and ask her to guide us as we struggle to remain faithful to the life- giving relationship that God has established with each one of us. She is our example and our inspiration, she intercedes for us with her Son, and with a mother's love she shields us from harm.

"Your Efforts Prepared the Ground for the Spirit to Come Down in Power" - Address to Youth Day Volunteers, July 21, 2008

As I bid you a fond farewell, I commend all of you to the loving intercession of Our Lady of the Southern Cross, Help of Christians, I invoke upon you the sevenfold gifts of the Holy Spirit, and I assure you of my continued prayers. God bless the young people of our world and God bless the people of Australia!

"Servants and Apostles of Christ Jesus" - Message for World Mission Sunday to be celebrated October 19, 2008

As I entrust to the Lord the apostolic work of the missionaries, the Churches all over the world and the faithful involved in various missionary activities and invoke the intercession of the Apostle Paul and Holy Mary, "the living Ark of the Covenant", the Star of evangelization and hope, I impart my Apostolic Blessing to everyone.

Angelus Address at Castel Gandolfo on July 27, 2008

May the Virgin Mary dispense the most beautiful graces to everyone. I also entrust to Mary the period of rest that I will have beginning tomorrow in Bressanone in the mountains of Alto Adige. Let us remain united in prayer!