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Pope Benedict XVI

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January 2009



Angelus Address--January 1, 2009

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

On this first day of the year, I am pleased to extend my very best wishes for peace and every good to all of you present in St Peter's Square and to those linked to us through radio and television. They are wishes that the Christian faith renders, so to speak, "reliable," anchoring them in the event that we are celebrating in these days: the Incarnation of the Word of God, born of the Virgin Mary. For this reason, while the Church celebrates the divine Motherhood of Mary Most Holy on this day that has been for more than forty years the World Day of Peace, she points to Jesus Christ as Prince of Peace to all. Let us invoke the Virgin Mary, Mother of God, so that she may help all peoples to walk together on the Way of peace.

I am very pleased to greet the English-speaking visitors present at today's Angelus, and I wish you all a happy New Year! I pray that Christians everywhere, through the intercession of Mary, Mother of God, will be filled with spiritual joy. During this year, may all who believe in Christ promote justice and charity, and bear constant witness to forgiveness, reconciliation and peace! May the Lord bless you and keep you!

Angelus Address--January 4, 2009

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The first to open her heart and to contemplate "the Word who became flesh" was Mary, Mother of Jesus. A humble girl from Galilee, she thus became the "Seat of Wisdom"! Like the Apostle John, each one of us is invited to "[take] her to his own home" (Jn 19: 27), to know Jesus deeply and to experience his faithful and inexhaustible love. And this is my wish for each one of you, dear brothers and sisters, at the beginning of this new year.

Angelus Address--January 11, 2009

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I invite you to implore an abundance of divine grace for this important international meeting of families. Let us do

so invoking the maternal intercession of the Virgin Mary, Queen of the Family.

Papal Homily for Mass With Baptisms--January 11, 2009

May the Virgin Mary, Mother of Jesus, beloved Son of God, keep watch over them and their families, always be with them, so that they may realize the project of salvation that baptism accomplishes in their lives.

On World Day of Migrants--Angelus Address on January 18, 2009

Finally, my thoughts to turn to the World Meeting of Families, which is concluding in Mexico City, and the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, which begins today. Dear brothers and sisters, I invite you to pray for all these intentions, invoking the maternal intercession of the Virgin Mary.

Pope's Video Message to Family Meeting in Mexico City--January 18, 2009

Dear brothers and sisters, Dear families,

To all of you gathered to celebrate the sixth World Meeting of Family under the maternal gaze of Our Lady of Guadalupe, "grace to you and peace from God (our) Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Thessalonians 1:2) You just finished praying the holy rosary, contemplating the joyful mysteries of the Son of God made man, who was born into the family of Mary and Joseph, and grew up in Nazareth in a domestic setting among daily tasks, prayer and neighborly relationships. His family welcomed him, and protected him with love, it initiated him in the observance of religious traditions and of the laws of his people, it accompanied him to human maturity and to the mission to which he was destined. "And Jesus advanced (in) wisdom and age and favor before God and man." (Luke 2:52)

The praying of the joyful mysteries has been alternated with listening to the testimonies of Christian families representing all the continents, which are like an echo and a reflection of our time in the history of Jesus and of his family. These testimonies have shown us that the seed of the Gospel continues to germinate and give fruit in the various situations of today.

In this beautiful work, the Blessed Virgin Mary accompanies us with her maternal intercession and with her heavenly protection, whom today I invoke with the glorious title of Our Lady of Guadalupe, and in whose motherly hands I put all the families in the entire world. Thank you very much.

On Seeking Christian Unity--General Audience on January 21, 2009

We invoke the maternal intercession of Mary so that she helps all Christians to cultivate a more attentive listening to the Word of God and a more intense prayer for unity.

Benedict XVI Becomes Honorary Citizen of Mariazell--January 21, 2009

During a brief ceremony held in a room of the Paul VI Hall, the Pope was made an honorary citizen of the Austrian town of Mariazell, home to one of the most important Marian shrines in Europe. Among those present at the ceremony, which was held following the Pope's weekly general audience, were Helmut Pertl, town mayor; Bishop Egon Kapellari of Graz-Seckau, and Fr. Karl Schauer O.S.B., rector of the Shrine of Mariazell.

In his remarks, the Holy Father expressed his joy "at being a citizen of Mariazell and at being able to live so close to the Mother of God." The Pope visited the town in September 2007.

"Mariazell is much more than just a 'place'," he said. It also represents "the living history of a pilgrimage of faith and prayer down the centuries," in which "a real answer is also present: that God exists and that, through His mother, He wishes to remain close to us. For this reason I am happy to be at home in my heart and now, so to say, also by law, in Mariazell."

After highlighting how Our Lady of Mariazell "has such impressive names as: *Magna Mater Austriae, Domina Magna Hungarorum, Magna Mater Gentium Slavorum,*" Benedict XVI explained that the Virgin "is above all *Magna Mater* yet," he said, "her greatness is evident precisely in the fact that she addresses herself to the smallest, that she is present for them, that we can turn to her at any moment just with our hearts."

Pope: Shrine is Key to Europe's Christian Identity--January 21, 2009

Benedict XVI gave an improvised discourse on the Virgin Mary, in gratitude for receiving honorary citizenship of Mariazell, home of one of the most important Marian shrines in Europe.

This distinction was conferred on the Pope after Wednesday's general audience. Mariazell is the site of the Basilica of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary, which houses a statue of Our Lady believed to be miraculous. For centuries, the town has been one of Europe's principal pilgrimage sites. Today, some one million pilgrims visit it annually.

The Holy Father spoke in German about being joyful "at being a citizen of Mariazell and at being able to live so close to the Mother of God," and he spoke to the others about Mary's role as "promoter of unity" between men.

The Pontiff last visited the shrine in September 2007, and he noted that "according to human foresight, in this life I will not be able to return to making a pilgrimage there physically, but now I live there truly and in this sense I am always present."

He recalled two previous visits to the shrine, and he told some stories that he lived through with the bishop and the rector, especially during his last visit in which they were surprised by a torrential rain.

European identity: Benedict XVI also affirmed the importance that this shrine has had on European history. "Mariazell is much more than a 'place,'" he said. It also represents "the living history of a pilgrimage of faith and prayer down the centuries." Yet, he added: "It is not only the prayers and invocations of men that are present, but rather a real answer is also present.

"We feel that the answer exists, that we do not extend a hand toward something unknown, that God exists, and that, through his mother, he wants to remain particularly close to us.

"For this reason I am happy to be at home in my heart and now, so to say, also by law, in Mariazell."

The Holy Father noted that Mariazell expresses all that Europe has been able to build. He affirmed that Mariazell is that "from which proceeds all that today forms [Europe's] identity, and through which Europe would always be able to return anew to be what it is: through the encounter with the Lord, to whom his mother guides us."

True greatness: The Pope recalled that the Virgin of Mariazell has received important titles throughout history, like "great mother" of Austria and of the Slavic towns, in this sanctuary visited by thousands of people during the centuries, until Mariazell was even considered the spiritual center of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

However, he added, the Virgin shows us that greatness does not arise from the quality of being unattainable.

He explained that Mary's "greatness is evident precisely in the fact that she addresses herself to the smallest, that she is present for them, that we can turn to her at any moment without having to pay an entrance fee, just with our hearts."

This greatness has nothing to do with "exterior majesty," the Pontiff continued, but rather with "goodness of heart that offers to all the experience of what it means to be together."

"In the trips that I make through the fields of memory," he said, "I always make a stop in Mariazell, precisely because I feel that there the Mother goes out to meet us and reunites us to all."

On Conversion--Angelus Address ~ January 25, 2009

Of course we Christians have not yet achieved the goal of full unity, but if we let ourselves be continually converted by the Lord Jesus, we will certainly arrive there. May the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the one, holy Church, obtain for us the gift of a true conversion, so that the desire of Christ, *ut unum sint*, be realized. To her we entrust the prayer meeting at which I will preside this afternoon in the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls, in which, as every year, the representatives of the Churches and ecclesial Communities present in Rome will participate.

**Papal Homily at Conclusion of Unity Week--Celebration of Vespers on January 25, 2009
concluding the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity**

Trusting in the prayer of the Lord Jesus Christ, and encouraged by the significant steps made by the ecumenical movement, with faith we invoke the Holy Spirit that he continue to illumine our path. May the Apostle Paul, who worked so hard and suffered for the unity of the mystical body of Christ, spur us on from heaven; and may the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the unity of the Church, accompany and sustain us.