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Pope Benedict XVI

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## The Marian Thoughts of Pope Benedict XVI

*April 2009*



### **On the Africa Trip – General Audience, April 1, 2009**

... I recall the solemn celebration of Vespers that took place in Yaoundé, in the Church of Mary Queen of the Apostles, Patroness of Cameroon, a large and modern church, which rises in the place where the first evangelizers of Cameroon worked, the Spiritan Missionaries. On the eve of the Solemnity of St. Joseph, to whose careful custody God entrusted his most precious treasures, Mary and Jesus, we gave glory to the one Father who is in heaven, together with the representatives of other Churches and ecclesial communities. Contemplating the spiritual figure of St. Joseph, who consecrated his life to Christ and the Virgin Mary, I invited priests, consecrated persons and members of ecclesial movements to be always faithful to their vocation, living in the presence of God and in joyful obedience of his Word. ... I entrust everything and everyone to the maternal intercession of Mary Most Holy, Queen of Africa and of the African saints and blessed.

### **"He Engendered Many Sons and Daughters in the Faith" – Homily at the Mass to Mark the fourth anniversary of Pope John Paul II's death, held in Saint Peter's Basilica, April 4, 2009**

... While we entrust his chosen soul to the maternal intercession of the Virgin Mary, whom he always loved tenderly, we very much hope that from heaven he will not cease to accompany us and intercede for us. That he will help each one of us to live, as he did, repeating with full confidence day after day to God, through Mary, *Totus tuus*. Amen!

### **On Preparation for World Youth Day in Madrid – Angelus Address of April 5, 2009.**

... Tomorrow the cross, accompanied by the icon of the Virgin Mary, will depart for the Spanish capital, and will be present there for the great Good Friday procession. After this a long pilgrimage through the dioceses of Spain will begin, and will end again in Madrid in the summer of 2011. May this cross and this icon of Mary be for all a sign of Christ's invincible love and that of his and our Mother! ... I greet all the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors here this Palm Sunday, when we recall the humble entry into Jerusalem of Jesus, our King and Messiah. With vivid memories of my visit to Sydney for World Youth Day, I greet Cardinal George Pell, Archbishop of Sydney, and Bishops Anthony Fisher and Julian Porteous, Auxiliary Bishops of Sydney, who are here together with a large group of young Australians in order to consign to their counterparts from Madrid the World Youth Day Cross and Icon of Our Lady. ... [After the ceremony of the handing over of the World Youth Day Cross and Icon, he said:] And now we turn with faith to the Virgin Mary, so that she will always watch over the path of the young and that she will help us to live Holy Week well.

## **Message to Madrid Youth for World Youth Day 2011 – April 6, 2009.**

... Let yourselves be invaded by this strength and wisdom, communicate it to others and, under the protection of the Most Holy Virgin Mary, prepare the World Youth Day with dedication and joy which will make of Madrid a place radiant of faith and life, where young people from the whole world celebrate Christ with enthusiasm.

## **On the Holy Triduum – General Audience on April 8, 2009**

... The Church watches in prayer like Mary, and together with Mary, sharing the same feelings of sorrow and trust in God. ... Dear brothers and sisters, let us dispose ourselves to live the Holy Triduum intensely, to participate ever more profoundly in the mystery of Christ. We are accompanied on this journey by the Holy Virgin, who in silence followed her son Jesus to Calvary, taking part with great sorrow in his sacrifice, thus cooperating with the mystery of the Redemption and becoming Mother of all believers (cf. John 19:25-27). Together with her we will enter the Cenacle, we will stay at the foot of the Cross, we will watch next to the dead Christ, awaiting with hope the dawn of the radiant day of the Resurrection.

## **Address at End of the Way of the Cross in the Roman Colosseum – April 10, 2009**

... Tomorrow, on Holy Saturday, we will watch and pray together with Mary, Our Lady of Sorrows, and we will pray with all who are suffering; we will pray above all with those who suffer in L'Aquila, hit by the earthquake. We will pray so that in this dark night, the star of hope will appear to them, the light of the Risen Lord.

## **Easter Vigil Homily in Saint Peter's Basilica– April 12, 2009**

... Christmas, the birth of the divine Infant, we can somehow immediately comprehend. We can love the child, we can imagine that night in Bethlehem, Mary's joy, the joy of Saint Joseph and the shepherds, the exultation of the angels.

## **Urbi et orbi Message for Easter – April 12, 2009**

... It is neither a myth nor a dream, it is not a vision or a utopia, it is not a fairy tale, but it is a singular and unrepeatable event: Jesus of Nazareth, son of Mary, who at dusk on Friday was taken down from the Cross and buried, has victoriously left the tomb. In fact, at dawn on the first day after the Sabbath, Peter and John found the tomb empty. ... Today the Church calls in prayer upon Mary, Star of Hope, asking her to guide humanity towards the safe haven of salvation which is the heart of Christ, the paschal Victim, the Lamb who has "redeemed the world," the Innocent one who has "reconciled us sinners with the Father." To him, our victorious King, to him who is crucified and risen, we sing out with joy our Alleluia!

## **On the Significance of Christ's Resurrection – General Audience on April 15, 2009 in Castel Gandolfo**

... May the Virgin Mary help us cultivate in ourselves, and around us, this climate of Easter joy, so that we may be witnesses of divine love in every situation of our existence. Once again, a happy Easter to all of you!

## **On Divine Mercy and the Catholic Family – Regina Caeli Address at Castel Gandolfo on April 19, 2009**

... The communion of the first Christians had the risen Christ as true center and foundation. The Gospel says that, in the moment of the Passion, when the Divine Master was arrested and condemned to death, the disciples were dispersed. Only Mary and the women, with the apostle John, remain together and follow him to Calvary. ... As for the first community, it is Mary who accompanies us in life every day. We invoke her as "Queen of Heaven," knowing that her royalty is like that of her Son: all love, and merciful love. I ask you again to entrust to her my service to the Church, while with confidence we say to her: "Mater misericordiae, ora pro nobis [Mother of mercy, pray for us.]" [In English the pope said:] ... In our prayer we commend our perseverance to the intercession of Mary, Queen of Heaven. Upon all of you I invoke God's abundant blessings of peace and joy!

## **Benedict XVI's Address to the Franciscan Family participating in the "Chapter of Mats" – Castel Gandolfo, April 20, 2009**

... Now go and bring to all the peace and love of Christ the Savior. May Mary Immaculate, "Virgin made Church" (cf. *Greetings to the Blessed Virgin Mary*, 1 FF, 259), accompany you always. And may my Apostolic Blessing, which I cordially impart to all of you here present, and the entire Franciscan family, support you as well.

## **On Ambrose Autpert, "first Mariologist of the West" – General Audience, April 22, 2009**

... In his reading of Revelation, which is similar to that of Tycho, Autpert is interested not so much in the second coming of Christ at the end of time, but in the consequences for the Church of his first coming, the Incarnation in the womb of the Virgin Mary. It tells us something very important: In reality, Christ, "must daily be born, die, and

rise in us who are his body." (*In Apoc. III: CCCM 27*, p. 205) In the context of the mystical dimension that surrounds every Christian, he looks to Mary as a model of the Church, a model for us all, because also in us and between us Christ must be born. On the basis that the Fathers saw in the "woman clothed with the sun" of Revelation 12:1 the image of the Church, Autpert argues: "The blessed and pious Virgin [...] daily gives birth to new people, from which is formed the General Body of the Mediator. It is not therefore surprising that she, in whose blessed womb the Church itself deserved to be united to his head, represents the image of the Church." In this sense Autpert sees a decisive role of the Virgin Mary in the work of Redemption--see also his homilies in the occasions of the purification and the assumption of the Blessed Virgin. His great reverence, and his deep love for the Mother of God at times inspired formulations that somehow anticipate those of St. Bernard and the Franciscan spirit, but without diverging toward questionable forms of sentimentalism, because he never separated the mystery of the Church from Mary. With good reason then Ambrose Autpert is considered the first great Mariologist in the West. The piety that, in his view, must free the soul from attachment to earthly and transient pleasures, he believes should be united with the deep study of the sacred sciences, especially the meditation of Sacred Scripture, which he describes as a "deep sky, an unfathomable abyss." (*In Apoc. IX*) In the beautiful prayer with which he concludes his remarks on the book of Revelation, emphasizing the priority which in every theological search for truth relies on love, he speaks to God with these words: "When you are scrutinized intellectually by us, you're not discovered as you truly are; it's only when you are loved that we reach you." We can see today in Ambrose Autpert a person who lived in a time of intense political exploitation of the Church, in which nationalism and tribalism had disfigured the face of the Church. But he, in the midst of all these difficulties that we also experience, was able to discover the true face of the Church in Mary, in the saints. And so he was able to understand what it means to be Catholic, Christian, to live the Word of God, to enter into this abyss, and so live the mystery of the Mother of God: to give new life to the Word of God, to offer to the Word of God one's own body at the present time. And with all his theological experience, the depth of his knowledge, Autpert understood that with mere theological research God can not be known as he really is. Only love can reach him. Let us listen to this message and ask the Lord to help us live the mystery of the Church today, in this our time. ...

[The Pope greeted the pilgrims in various languages. In English,

he said:] Dear Brothers and Sisters,

... In his extensive commentary on the Book of Revelation, viewed as a treatise on the Church, Autpert taught that Christ must "be born, die and rise again every day in us, his body." Hence the Virgin Mary serves as a model of the Church. Indeed, Autpert is considered the first great Marian theologian in the West, and he writes with an almost mystical love for the Blessed Virgin. Love, he says, is the key to our knowledge of God. ...

### **"God Really Speaks to Men and Women in a Human Way" – Address to Biblical Commission on April 23, 2009**

... May the Virgin Mary, model of docility and obedience to the Word of God, teach you to accept ever better the inexhaustible riches of Sacred Scripture, not only through intellectual research but also in your lives as believers, so that your work and your action may contribute to making the light of Sacred Scripture shine ever brighter before the faithful.

### **On the Goal of Sanctity – Regina Caeli Address on April 26, 2009**

... We lift up now our filial prayer to the Virgin Mary, who fully followed the Word of God, such that his love in her was truly perfect (cf. 1 John 2:5a).

### **"Let Us Thank the Lord for the Gift of Holiness" – Homily at Canonization Mass on April 26, 2009**

... May the maternal intercession of Mary, Queen of Saints and of these five new luminous examples of holiness whom we venerate joyfully today, obtain for us that we may carry out this evangelical mission. Amen!

### **On Saint Germanus – General Audience, April 29, 2009**

... Patriarch Germanus gave much attention to the liturgical celebrations, and for a certain time, he was also considered the one who began the feast of *Akathist*. As is known, *Akathist* is an ancient and famous hymn which arose in the Byzantine circle and was dedicated to the *Theotokos*, the Mother of God. Despite the fact that from the theological point of view, Germanus cannot be classified as a great thinker, some of his works had a certain echo above all because of certain of his intuitions regarding Mariology. From him, in fact, we have various homilies about Marian themes and some of them have profoundly marked the piety of entire generations of faithful, as much in the East as in the West.

His splendid homilies on the Presentation of Mary in the temple are still-living testimonies of the non-written tradition of the Christian Churches. Generations of nuns and monks, and members of countless institutes of consecrated life, continue finding even today precious treasures of spirituality in these texts. Some Marian texts

from Germanus that are part of his homilies pronounced on *SS. Deiparae dormitionem*, corresponding to our feast of the assumption, still create awe. Among these texts, Pope Pius XII used one that he set as a pearl in the apostolic constitution *Munificentissimus Deus* (1950), with which he declared the dogma of faith, the assumption of Mary. Pope Pius XII cited this text in that constitution, presenting it as one of the arguments in favor of the permanent faith of the Church in the corporal assumption of Mary into heaven. Germanus wrote: "Could it ever happen, most holy Mother of God, that heaven and earth feel honored by your presence, and you, with your departure, would leave man deprived of your protection? No. It is impossible to think of such a thing. In fact when you were in the world you did not feel that the things of heaven were foreign, in the same way, after having emigrated from this world, you have not felt removed from the possibility of communicating in spirit with men. ... In fact you have not abandoned those to whom you have guaranteed salvation ... indeed your spirit lives eternally, nor has your flesh suffered the corruption of the tomb.

"You, oh Mother, are close to everyone and protect everyone, and even though our eyes cannot see you, we completely know, oh One on high, that you live in the midst of all of us and that you make yourself present in the most varied of ways

... You are she who, as it is written, appears in beauty, and your virginal body is all holy, all chaste, entirely the dwelling place of God, so that it is henceforth completely exempt from dissolution into dust. Though still human, it is changed into the heavenly life of incorruptibility, truly living and glorious, undamaged and sharing in perfect life.

"In fact it was impossible that that which had been converted into the vase of God and the living temple of the most holy divinity of the Only Begotten would be enclosed in the sepulcher of the dead. Again we believe with certainty that you continue walking with us." (*PG 98, coll. 344B-346B, passim*)

[In English the Pope said:] Dear Brothers and Sisters,

In our catechesis on the early Christian writers of East and West, we turn to Saint Germanus, Bishop and Patriarch of Constantinople, whose feast day is celebrated in the Greek Church on May 12. In 717, while Constantinople was under siege by Saracen armies, Germanus led a procession with the venerated image of the *Theotokos*, the Mother of God, and relics of the Holy Cross. The siege was lifted, convincing him that God had responded to the people's devotion. Some time later however, Emperor Leo III initiated his campaign against the use of sacred images, judging them to be a source of idolatry. When Germanus opposed the Emperor publicly in 730, he was forced to retire in exile to a monastery, where he later died. His memory was not forgotten, and in the Second Council of Nicea, which restored devotion to sacred images, his name was honored. The writings of Germanus, steeped in an ardent love of the Church and devotion to the Mother of God, have had a wide influence on the piety of the faithful both of the East and the West. He promoted a solemn and beautiful Liturgy and is also known for his insights in Mariology. In homilies on the Presentation and the Dormition of the Virgin Mary, Germanus extols her virtue and her mission. A text which sees the source of her bodily incorruption in her virginal maternity was included by Pope Pius XII in his Apostolic Constitution *Munificentissimus Deus*. I pray that through the intercession of Saint Germanus we may all be renewed in our love of the Church and devotion to the Mother of God.