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Pope Benedict XVI

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May 2009



"Continue to Be Beacons of Hope, Strength and Support for Others" – Address to the Papal Foundation Members, May 2, 2009

... Entrusting all of you to the loving intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, she who remains always in our midst as our Mother, the Mother of Hope, (cf. *Spe Salvi*, 50), I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing to you and your families as a pledge of joy and peace in the Risen Savior.

Vocations and the Holy Land Trip – *Regina Caeli* Address on May 3, 2009

... Addressing now the Virgin Mary, let us invoke her as Mother of the Good Shepherd so that she watches over the new priests of the Diocese of Rome, and so that in the whole world, numerous and holy vocations of special consecration to the Kingdom of God may flourish.

On St. John Damascene – General Audience on May 6, 2009.

... In the East, he is remembered above all for his three discourses against those who calumniate holy images, [discourses] which were condemned after his death by the iconoclast Council of Hieria (754). These discourses, however, were the principal motive for his reinstatement and canonization by the orthodox fathers gathered in the Second Council of Nicaea (787), the Seventh Ecumenical Council. In these texts it is possible to find the first important theological attempts to legitimize the veneration of sacred images, uniting to them the mystery of the incarnation of the Son of God in the womb of the Virgin Mary. ... United to these underlying ideas, John Damascene also places the veneration of the relics of the saints, on the base of the conviction that holy Christians, having been made participants in the resurrection of Christ, cannot be considered simply as "the dead." Enumerating, for example, those whose relics or images are worthy of veneration, John specifies in his third discourse in defense of images: "Before all (we venerate) those among whom God has rested, the only holy one who dwells among the saints (cf. Isaiah 57:15), such as the holy Mother of God and all the saints. These are those who, inasmuch as possible, have made themselves similar to God with their will and by the indwelling and help of God, [and] are really called

gods (cf. Psalm 82:6), not by nature, but rather by contingency, as red-hot iron is called fire, not by nature, but by contingency and through participation in the fire. It is said, in fact: "You will be holy because I am holy." (Leviticus 19:2) (III, 33, col. 1352 A).

On Mary's Example of Womanly Virtue – *Regina Coeli* Address at Amman International Stadium in Jordan.

Dear friends,

During the Mass I spoke about the prophetic charism of women as bearers of love, teachers of mercy and artisans of peace. The supreme example of womanly virtue is the Blessed Virgin Mary: the Mother of Mercy and Queen of Peace. As we turn to her now, let us seek her maternal intercession for all the families of these lands, that they may truly be schools of prayer and schools of love. Let us ask the Mother of the Church to look down in mercy upon all the Christians of these lands, and with the help of her prayers, may they be truly one in the faith they profess and the witness they bear. Let us ask her who responded so generously to the angel's call, and accepted her vocation to become the Mother of God, to give courage and strength to all young people today who are discerning their vocations, so that they too may generously dedicate themselves to carrying out the Lord's will. In this season of Eastertide, it is with the title *Regina Coeli* that we call upon the Blessed Virgin. As a fruit of the Redemption won by her Son's death and resurrection, she too was raised to everlasting glory and crowned Queen of Heaven. With great confidence in the power of her intercession, with joy in our hearts and with love for our glorious ever- Virgin Mother, we turn to her now and ask for her prayers.

Address at Mount Nebo – May 9, 2009

... From the earliest times, Christians have come on pilgrimage to the sites linked to the history of the Chosen People, the events of Christ's life and the nascent Church. This great tradition, which my present pilgrimage is meant to continue and confirm, is grounded in the desire to see, to touch, and to savor in prayer and contemplation the places blessed by the physical presence of our Savior, his Blessed Mother, the apostles and the first disciples who saw him risen from the dead. Here, in the footsteps of the countless pilgrims who have preceded us in every century, we are challenged to appreciate more fully the gift of our faith and to grow in that communion which transcends every limit of language, race and culture.

"The Holy See and the State of Israel Have Many Shared Values" – Address Upon Arriving at Tel Aviv Ben Gurion International Airport – May 11, 2009

... In this land, where Peter received his commission to feed the Lord's sheep, I come as Peter's successor to minister among you. It will be my special joy to join you for the concluding celebrations of the Year of the Family, due to take place in Nazareth, home of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

Address to Holy Land Ordinaries in Upper Room – Jerusalem May 12, 2009

... Dear brothers, as we address together our joyful prayer to Mary, Queen of Heaven, let us place confidently in her hands the well-being and spiritual renewal of all Christians in the Holy Land, so that, under the guidance of their Pastors, they may grow in faith, hope and love, and persevere in their mission as promoters of communion and peace.

Address at Shrine of the Annunciation – May 14, 2009

... What happened here in Nazareth, far from the gaze of the world, was a singular act of God, a powerful intervention in history, through which a child was conceived who was to bring salvation to the whole world. ... The Spirit who "came upon Mary"

(cf. Lk 1:35) is the same Spirit who hovered over the waters at the dawn of Creation (cf. Gen 1:2). We are reminded that the Incarnation was a new creative act. When our Lord Jesus Christ was conceived in Mary's virginal womb through the power of the Holy Spirit, God united himself with our created humanity, entering into a permanent new relationship with us and ushering in a new Creation. The narrative of the Annunciation illustrates God's extraordinary courtesy (cf. Mother Julian of Norwich, Revelations 77-79). He does not impose himself, he does not simply pre-determine the part that Mary will play in his plan for our salvation: he first seeks her consent. In the original Creation there was clearly no question of God seeking the consent of his creatures, but in this new Creation he does so. Mary stands in the place of all humanity. She speaks for us all when she responds to the angel's invitation. Saint Bernard describes how the whole court of heaven was waiting with eager anticipation for her word of consent that consummated the nuptial union between God and humanity. The attention of all the choirs of angels was riveted on this spot, where a dialogue took place that would launch a new and definitive chapter in world history. Mary said, "Let it be done to me according to your word." And the Word of God became flesh.

In the State of Israel and the Palestinian Territories, Christians form a minority of the population. Perhaps at times you feel that your voice counts for little. Many of your fellow Christians have emigrated, in the hope of finding greater security and better prospects elsewhere. Your situation calls to mind that of the young virgin Mary, who led a hidden life in Nazareth, with little by way of worldly wealth or influence. Yet to quote Mary's words in her great hymn of praise, the *Magnificat*, God has looked upon his servant in her lowliness, he has filled the hungry with good things. Draw strength from Mary's canticle, which very soon we will be singing in union with the whole Church throughout the world! Have the confidence to be faithful to Christ and to remain here in the land that he sanctified with his own presence! Like Mary, you have a part to play in God's plan for salvation, by bringing Christ forth into the world, by bearing witness to him and spreading his message of peace and unity. For this, it is essential that you should be united among yourselves, so that the Church in the Holy Land can be clearly recognized as "a sign and instrument of communion with God and of the unity of the entire human race." (*Lumen Gentium*, 1) Your unity in faith, hope and love is a fruit of the Holy Spirit dwelling within you, enabling you to be effective instruments of God's peace, helping to build genuine reconciliation between the different peoples who recognize Abraham as their father in faith. For, as Mary joyfully proclaimed in her *Magnificat*, God is ever "mindful of his mercy, the mercy promised to our forefathers, to Abraham and his children forever." (Lk 1:54-55)

Dear friends in Christ, be assured that I constantly remember you in my prayer, and I ask you to do the same for me. Let us turn now towards our heavenly Father, who in this place looked upon his servant in her lowliness, and let us sing his praises in union with the Blessed Virgin Mary, with all the choirs of angels and saints, and with the whole Church in every part of the world.

Address at Nazareth Interreligious Meeting – In the auditorium of the Annunciation Shrine in Nazareth, during an interreligious meeting with leaders in Galilee, including Christians, Muslims, Jews and Druze, May 14, 2009

... I feel particularly blessed to visit this city revered by Christians as the place where the Angel announced to the Virgin Mary that she would conceive by the power of the Holy Spirit. Here too Joseph, her betrothed, saw the Angel in a dream and was directed to name the child 'Jesus'. After the marvelous events surrounding his birth, the child was brought to this city by Joseph and Mary where he "grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him." (Lk 2:40)

Homily on Nazareth's Mount of Precipice in Nazareth, in a Mass that concluded the Year of the Family launched by the Catholic Church in the

Holy Land – May 14, 2009

... Here in the home town of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, we have gathered to mark the conclusion of the Year of the Family celebrated by the Church in the Holy Land. ... All of us need, as Pope Paul VI said here, to return to Nazareth, to contemplate ever anew the silence and love of the Holy Family, the model of all Christian family life. Here, in the example of Mary, Joseph and Jesus, we come to appreciate even more fully the sacredness of the family, which in God's plan is based on the lifelong fidelity of a man and a woman consecrated by the marriage covenant and accepting of God's gift of new life. ... As we reflect on these realities here, in the town of the Annunciation, our thoughts naturally turn to Mary, 'full of grace', the mother of the Holy Family and our Mother. Nazareth reminds us of our need to acknowledge and respect the God-given dignity and proper role of women, as well as their particular charisms and talents. Whether as mothers in families, as a vital presence in the work force and the institutions of society, or in the particular vocation of following our Lord by the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience, women have an indispensable role in creating that "human ecology" (cf. *Centesimus Annus*, 39) which our world, and this land, so urgently needs: a milieu in which children learn to love and to cherish others, to be honest and respectful to all, to practice the virtues of mercy and forgiveness. Here too, we think of Saint Joseph, the just man whom God wished to place over his household. From Joseph's strong and fatherly example Jesus learned the virtues of a manly piety, fidelity to one's word, integrity and hard work. In the carpenter of Nazareth he saw how authority placed at the service of love is infinitely more fruitful than the power which seeks to dominate. How much our world needs the example, guidance and quiet strength of men like Joseph! Finally, in contemplating the Holy Family of Nazareth, we turn to the child Jesus, who in the home of Mary and Joseph grew in wisdom and understanding, until the day he began his public ministry. Here I would simply like to leave a particular thought with the young people here. The Second Vatican Council teaches that children have a special role to play in the growth of their parents in holiness (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 48). I urge you to reflect on this, and to let the example of Jesus guide you, not only in showing respect for your parents, but also helping them to discover more fully the love which gives our lives their deepest meaning. In the Holy Family of Nazareth, it was Jesus who taught Mary and Joseph something of the greatness of the love of God his heavenly Father, the ultimate source of all love, the Father from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name (cf. Eph 3:14-15). ... "Let it be done to me according to your word." (Lk 1:38) May our Lady of the Annunciation, who courageously opened her heart to God's mysterious plan, and became the Mother of all believers, guide and sustain us by her prayers. May she obtain for us and our families the grace to open our ears to that word of the Lord which has the power to build us up (cf. Acts 20:32), to inspire courageous decisions, and to guide our feet into the path of peace!

On the Holy Land – Regina Caeli Address, May 17, 2009

... I entrust that dear country to the maternal protection of Holy Virgin of Madhu, loved and venerated by all Sri Lankans, and I lift up my prayers to the Lord that he will hasten the day of reconciliation and peace. ... Through the prayers of Mary, Queen of Peace, may the Christians of the Holy Land, in cooperation with their Jewish and Muslim neighbors, and all people of good will, work in harmony to build a future of justice and peace in those lands. Upon them, and upon all of you, I invoke an abundance of Easter joy in Christ our Savior.

"I Presented Myself as a Pilgrim of Faith" – General Audience, May 20, 2009

... The third and final Mass with the people, I celebrated last Thursday in Nazareth, the city of the Holy Family. We prayed for all families so that they rediscover the beauty of matrimony and family life, the value of domestic

spirituality and education, and attention to children, who have the right to grow in peace and serenity. As well, we sang our faith in the creative and transforming power of God. Where the Word incarnated himself in the womb of the Virgin Mary, arises an undying spring of hope and joy, that does not cease to encourage the heart of the Church, pilgrim in history.

Regina Caeli Address on May 24, 2009 in the Miranda Plaza of Cassino

... May the Virgin Mary, Queen of Peace, help all Christians, in their different vocations and situations in life, to be witnesses of that peace that Christ gave us and left us as a demanding mission to realize everywhere. Today, March (sic) 24, liturgical memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Help of Christians--who is venerated with great devotion at the shrine of Sheshan in Shanghai--we celebrate the Day of Prayer for the Church in China. My thoughts turn to all the people of China. ... May your patriarch [St. Benedict] help and accompany you, with St. Scholastica his sister; may your holy patrons, and above all Mary, Mother of the Church and Star of our hope, protect you. Amen!

Papal Address at Conclusion of Marian Month of May – Vatican Gardens May 30, 2009

Venerable Brothers, dear Brothers and Sisters,

I greet all of you with affection at the end of the traditional Marian vigil that concludes the month of May in the Vatican. This year it has acquired a very special value since it falls on the eve of Pentecost. Gathering together, spiritually recollected before the Virgin Mary, contemplating the mysteries of the Holy Rosary, you have relived the experience of the first disciples, gathered together in the room of the Last Supper with "the Mother of Jesus," "persevering and united in prayer" awaiting the coming of the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 1:14). We too, in this penultimate evening of May, from the Vatican hill, ask for the pouring out of the Spirit Paraclete upon us, upon the Church that is in Rome and upon the whole Christian people.

The great Feast of Pentecost invites us to meditate upon the relationship between the Holy Spirit and Mary, a very close, privileged, indissoluble relationship. The Virgin of Nazareth was chosen beforehand to become the Mother of the Redeemer by the working of the Holy Spirit: in her humility, she found grace in God's eyes (cf. Luke 1:30). In effect, in the New Testament we see that Mary's faith "draws," so to speak, the Holy Spirit. First of all in the conception of the Son of God, which the archangel Gabriel explains in this way: "The Holy Spirit will descend upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you." (Luke 1:35) Immediately afterward Mary went to help Elizabeth, and when her greeting reached Elizabeth's ears, the Holy Spirit made the child jump in the womb of her elderly cousin (cf. Luke 1:44); and the whole dialogue between the two mothers is inspired by the Spirit of God, above all the *Magnificat*, the canticle of praise with which Mary expresses her sentiments. The whole event of Jesus' birth and his early childhood is guided in an almost palpable manner by the Holy Spirit, even if he is not always mentioned. Mary's heart, in perfect consonance with the divine Son, is the temple of the Spirit of truth, where every word and every event are kept in faith, hope and charity (cf. Luke 2:19, 51).

We can thus be certain that the most Sacred Heart of Jesus, in his whole hidden life in Nazareth, always found a "hearth" that was always burning with prayer and constant attention to the Holy Spirit in Mary's Immaculate Heart. The wedding feast at Cana is a witness to this singular harmony between Mother and Son in seeking God's will. In a situation like the wedding feast, charged with symbols of the covenant, the Virgin Mary intercedes and, in a certain sense, provokes, a sign of superabundant divine grace: the "good wine" that points to mystery of the Blood of Christ. This leads us directly to Calvary, where Mary stands under the

cross with the other women and the Apostle John. Together the Mother and the disciple spiritually taken in Jesus' testament: his last words and his last breath, in which he begins to send out the Spirit; and they take in the silent crying out of his Blood, poured out completely for us (cf. John 19:25-34). Mary knew where the blood came from: it was formed in her by the work of the Holy Spirit, and she knew that this same creative "power" would raise Jesus up, as he promised.

In this way Mary's faith sustains the faith of the disciples until the meeting with the risen Lord, and will continue to accompany them even after his ascension into heaven, as they await the 'baptism of the Holy Spirit'. (cf. Acts 1:5) At Pentecost, the Virgin Mary appears again as Bride of the Spirit, having a universal maternity with respect to those who are born from God through faith in Christ. This is why Mary is for all generations the image and model of the Church, who together with the Holy Spirit journeys through time invoking Christ's glorious return: "Come, Lord Jesus." (cf. Revelation 22:17, 20)

Dear friends, in Mary's school we too learn to recognize the Holy Spirit's presence in our life, to listen to his inspirations and to follow them with docility. He makes us grow in the fullness of Christ, in those good fruits that the apostle Paul lists in the Letter to the Galatians: "Love, joy, peace, magnanimity, benevolence, goodness, fidelity, meekness, self-control." (Galatians 5:22) I hope that you will be filled with these gifts and will always walk with Mary according to the Spirit and, as I express my praise for your participation in this evening celebration, I impart my Apostolic Benediction to all of you from my heart.

Learning from Mary to follow the Spirit – *Regina Caeli* Address, St. Peter's Square May 31, 2009

... The risen Jesus told his disciples: "Remain in the city until you are given power from on high." (Luke 24:49) This happened in a perceptible way in the Cenacle, while they were gathered together with Mary, the Virgin Mother, in prayer. ...

Dear friends, this year Pentecost falls on the last day of the month of May on which the beautiful Marian Feast of the Visitation is usually celebrated. This fact invites us to let ourselves be inspired and taught by the Virgin Mary, who was a protagonist in both events. In Nazareth she received the annunciation of her singular maternity and, immediately after she conceived Jesus by the working of the Holy Spirit, was moved by the same Spirit of love to go to help her elderly relative Elizabeth, who was in the sixth month of a similarly miraculous pregnancy. The young Mary, who carried Jesus in her womb and, forgetting herself, goes to help her neighbor, is a stupendous icon of the Church in the perennial youth of the Spirit, of the missionary Church of the Incarnate Word, called to bring [this Word] to the world and to testify to him especially in the service of charity. We invoke the intercession of Mary Most Holy, that the Church in our time may be powerfully strengthened by the Holy Spirit. The comforting presence of the Holy Spirit is felt in a special way by the ecclesial communities that suffer persecution for Christ's name, because, participating in his sufferings, they receive the Holy Spirit in the abundance of glory (cf. 1 Peter 4:13-14).