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Pope Benedict XVI

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January 2010



**"The First to See the Face of God Made Man" -
Homily for Feast of Mary, Mother of God,
January 1, 2010**

Venerable Brothers,
Distinguished Ladies and
Gentlemen, Dear Brothers and
Sisters,

On the first day of the New Year we have the joy and the grace of celebrating the Most Holy Mother of God and, at the same time, the World Day of Peace. In both these events we are celebrating Christ, Son of God, born of the Virgin Mary and our true peace! ...

One may interpret the whole biblical narrative as the gradual revelation of the face of God, until it reaches his full manifestation in Jesus Christ. "When the time had fully come", the Apostle Paul has reminded us today too,

"God sent forth his Son," (Gal 4: 4) immediately adding, "born of woman, born under the law." God's face took on a human face, letting itself be seen and recognized in the Son of the Virgin Mary, who for this reason we venerate with the loftiest title of "Mother of God." She, who had preserved in her heart the secret of the divine motherhood, was the first to see the face of God made man in the small fruit of her womb. The Mother had a very special, unique and, in a certain way, exclusive relationship with the newborn Son. The first face a child sees is that of his mother and this gaze is crucial for his relationship with life, with himself, with others and with God; it is also crucial if he is to become a "son of peace." (Lk 10: 6) Among the many typologies of icons of the Virgin Mary in the Byzantine tradition is the one called "of tenderness" that portrays the Child Jesus with his face resting, cheek to cheek, against his Mother's. The Child gazes at the Mother and she is looking at us, almost as if to mirror for those who are observing and praying the tenderness of God who came down to her from Heaven and was incarnate in the Son of man, whom she holds in her arms. We can contemplate in this Marian image something of God himself: a sign of the ineffable love that impelled him "to give his Only Son." (cf. Jn 3: 16) But that same icon also shows us, in Mary, the face of the Church which reflects Christ's light upon us and upon the whole world, the Church through which the Good News reaches every person: "You are no longer a slave but a son" (Gal 4: 7), as once again we read in St Paul. ...

Unfortunately the icon of the Mother of the God of Tenderness finds its tragic opposite in the sorrowful images of so many children and their mothers at the mercy of war and violence, refugees, asylum seekers and forced migrants. ... The Virgin Mother shows the Infant Jesus to the shepherds of Bethlehem, who rejoice and praise the Lord. (cf. Lk 2: 20) The Church renews the mystery for people of every generation, she shows them God's Face so that, with his Blessing, they may walk on the path of peace.

"Thank You, Holy Mother, Who Gave birth to the Savior" - Angelus Address, January 1, 2010

Dear brothers and sisters: Today the Lord gives us the gift of beginning a new year in his name and under the gaze of the Most Holy Virgin, whom we celebrate with the solemnity of the Mother of God. I am happy to be with you for this first Angelus of 2010. I entrust this call to the intercession of the Most Holy Mother of God, Mary.

Today, the liturgy reminds us that eight days after the birth of the Child, she and her husband Joseph brought him to be circumcised, according to the Law of Moses, and gave him the name Jesus, which had been given him by the angel (Luke 2:21). This name, which means "God saves," is the fulfillment of the revelation of God. Jesus is the face of God. He is the blessing for each person and for all populations. He is the peace of the world. Thank you, Holy Mother, who gave birth to the Savior, the Prince of Peace!

[In English, he said:]

I am happy to greet all the English-speaking visitors present at today's Angelus prayer and I wish you all a blessed New Year filled with abundant joy and consolation in Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! On this World Day of Peace I pray that Christians everywhere, through the intercession of Mary, the Mother of God, may be careful stewards of nature and diligent promoters of forgiveness, reconciliation and peace!

On Hope for 2010: "History Has Meaning Because It Is 'Inhabited' by the Wisdom of God" - Angelus Address, January 3, 2010

... Thus let us turn to the Virgin Mary to learn this spiritual disposition from her. The Son of God did not take flesh from her without her consent. Every time the Lord wants to take a step forward with us toward the "promised land," he first knocks at our hearts. He waits, so to speak, for our "yes," in small

decisions as in important ones. May Mary help us always to accept God's will with humility and courage, so that the trials and suffering of life may help to hasten the coming of his Kingdom of justice and peace.

"A Confirmation of the Perfect Harmony Between Human Seeking and Divine Truth" Angelus Address, January 6, 2010

... The culmination of their search was when they found themselves before "the Child with Mary, his Mother...." (Matthew 2:11)

A final detail confirms, in the Magi, the unity between intelligence and faith: It is the fact that "warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way." (Matthew 2:12) It would have been natural to return to Jerusalem, to Herod's palace and the Temple, to proclaim their discovery. Instead, the Magi, who chose the Child as their sovereign, protected him in concealment, in keeping with Mary's style, or better, with that of God himself. And thus, as they appeared, they disappeared in silence, content, but also changed by the encounter with Truth. They had discovered a new face of God, a new royalty: that of love. May the Virgin Mary, model of true wisdom, help us to be genuine seekers of the truth of God, capable of living always the profound harmony that exists between reason and faith, science and revelation. ...

On the Sacrament of Baptism: "We Have the Gift and Task of Living as Sons of God"- Angelus Address, January 10, 2010

... We think of what St. Paul writes to the Galatians: "God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to ransom those under the law, so that we might receive adoption" (Galatians 4:4-5); or again, of St. John in the prologue to his Gospel: "To those who received him he gave the power to become sons of God...." (John 1:12) As Christians, thanks to the gift of the Holy Spirit received in baptism, we have the gift and task of living as sons of

God and brothers, to be like "heaven" in a new humanity, united and rich in peace and hope. We are helped in this by the consciousness of having, besides a Father in heaven, a mother too, the Church, of whom the Virgin Mary is the perennial model. To her we entrust the newly baptized children and their families, and we ask for all the joy to be re-born every day "from above," from the love of God, that makes us his children and brothers among ourselves.

"Continue to Produce Wise and Generous Pastors" - Address to North American College, January 10, 2010

... Dear brothers, I pray that in these days you will be renewed in the gift of the Holy Spirit which you received on the day of your ordination. In the college chapel, dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary under the title of the Immaculate Conception, Our Lady is portrayed in the company of four outstanding models and patrons of priestly life and ministry: St. Gregory the Great, St. Pius X, St. John Mary Vianney and Saint Vincent de Paul. During this Year for Priests, may these great saints continue to watch over the students who daily pray in their midst; may they guide and sustain your own ministry, and intercede for the priests of the United States.

...

Letter of Condolence at the Death of Madagascar Cardinal Armand Gatan Razafindratandra January 12, 2010

... By the maternal intercession of the Virgin Mary, Queen of Africa, the Lord may welcome his faithful servant into his kingdom of peace and light.

To Haiti: We Won't Abandon You - Message to Country's President and Bishops

... I invoke Our Lady of Perpetual Help, that she would be a mother of tenderness and guide hearts so that solidarity will prevail over isolation and [the

attitude of] every man for himself.

Conferral of Honorary Citizenship of the City of Freising January 16, 2010

Mein Wunsch meine Bitte ist, da der Herr auch weiterhin diese Stadt segnen und Unsere Liebe Frau vom Freisinger Dom sie beschützen möge, da Freising auch künftig eine Stätte gläubigen und fröhlichen menschlichen Lebens sein möge. ...

On Baby Jesus, the Refugee: "The Child ... Must First of All and Always be Considered a Person" Angelus Address, January 17, 2010

... We entrust these three intentions -- our migrant and refugee brothers, religious dialogue with the Jews and the unity of Christians -- to the maternal intercession of Mary Most Holy, Mother of Christ and Mother of the Church. ...

On Christian Unity: "The Call To Holiness Is for All" Angelus Address, January 24, 2010

... May the Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, obtain for us always to make progress in communion, to transmit the beauty of being one in the unity of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. ...

"Priests Stand at the Threshold of a New Era" - Message for World Communications Day, January 24, 2010 (to be celebrated May 16)

... With this confidence, I invoke upon you the protection of the Mother of God and of the Holy Cur of Ars and, with affection, I impart to each of you my Apostolic Blessing.

"We Must from Now on Give a Common Witness" - Address at Close of Prayer Week for Unity, January 25, 2010

May the Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, grant that her Son's desire may be fulfilled as soon as possible: "That they may all be one... so that the world may believe" (Jn 17: 21).

"The Secret of True Happiness: To Become Saints" General Audience, January 27, 2010

... May the Virgin, tenderly loved by Francis, obtain this gift for us. We entrust ourselves to her with the same words of the Poverello of Assisi: "Holy Virgin Mary, there is no one like you born in the world among women, daughter and handmaid of the Most High King and heavenly Father, Mother of our Most Holy Lord Jesus Christ, spouse of the Holy Spirit: pray for us ... to your most holy favorite Son, Lord and Master" (Francis of Assisi, Scritti, 163).

"Be Vital And Lively Institutions, Able To Grasp The Questions Of Society" - Address To Pontifical Academies, January 28, 2010

... I assure you of my remembrance in prayer, and in invoking upon you and your Institutions the intercession of the Mother of God, Seat of Wisdom, and of St Thomas Aquinas, I wholeheartedly impart the Apostolic Blessing.

"Charity Is The Christian Difference" Angelus Address, January 31, 2010

Today, Jan. 31, we especially remember St. John Bosco, founder of the Salesian family and patron saint of young people. In this Year for Priests I would like to invoke his intercession so that priests always be educators and fathers for young people; and that, experiencing this pastoral charity, many young people will welcome the call to give their life for Christ and the Gospel. May Mary Our Help, model of charity, obtain these graces for us.