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May 2011

Pope Benedict XVI

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*May 2011*



**"He Gave Us the Strength to Believe in Christ" - Homily for John Paul II Beatification Mass, May 1, 2011**

... Today is also the first day of May, Mary's month, and the liturgical memorial of Saint Joseph the Worker....

Our thoughts turn to yet another beatitude, one which appears in the Gospel before all others. It is the beatitude of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of the Redeemer. Mary, who had just conceived Jesus, was told by Saint Elizabeth: "Blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord" (Lk 1:45). The beatitude of faith has its model in Mary, and all of us rejoice that the beatification of John Paul II takes place on this first day of the month of Mary, beneath the maternal gaze of the one who by her faith sustained the faith of the

Apostles and constantly sustains the faith of their successors, especially those called to occupy the Chair of Peter. Mary does not appear in the accounts of Christ's resurrection, yet hers is, as it were, a continual, hidden presence: she is the Mother to whom Jesus entrusted each of his disciples and the entire community. In particular we can see how Saint John and Saint Luke record the powerful, maternal presence of Mary in the passages preceding those read in today's Gospel and first reading. In the account of Jesus' death, Mary appears at the foot of the cross (Jn 19:25), and at the beginning of the Acts of the Apostles she is seen in the midst of the disciples gathered in prayer in the Upper Room (Acts 1:14)....

All of us, as members of the people of God - bishops, priests, deacons, laity, men and women religious - are making our pilgrim way to the heavenly homeland where the Virgin Mary has preceded us, associated as she was in a unique and perfect way to the mystery of Christ and the Church. Karol Wojtyła took part in the Second Vatican Council, first as an auxiliary Bishop and then as Archbishop of Kraków. He was fully aware that the Council's decision to devote the last chapter of its Constitution on the Church to Mary meant that the Mother of the Redeemer is held up as an image and model of holiness for every Christian and for the entire Church. This was the theological vision which Blessed John Paul II discovered as a young man and subsequently maintained and deepened throughout his life. A vision which is expressed in the scriptural image of the crucified Christ with Mary, his Mother, at his side. This icon from the Gospel of John (19:25-27) was taken up in the episcopal and later the papal coat-of-arms of Karol Wojtyła: a golden cross with the letter "M" on the lower right and the motto "Totus tuus," drawn from the well-known words of Saint Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort in which Karol Wojtyła found a guiding light for his life: "Totus tuus ego

sum et omnia mea tua sunt. Accipio te in mea omnia. Praebe mihi cor tuum, Maria - I belong entirely to you, and all that I have is yours. I take you for my all. O Mary, give me your heart" (*Treatise on True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin*, 266)....

**On Blessed John Paul II: May His Example Inspire Us to Be "Icons of Divine Mercy" - Regina Caeli Address, May 1, 2011**

... And now in spiritual union with John Paul II, we turn with love to Mary Most Holy, entrusting to her, Mother of the Church, the journey of the whole People of God.

*On Prayer: First Audience in New Series "Virtually Always and Everywhere, People Have Turned to God"- General Audience, May 4, 2011*

[In Polish]

I greet cordially all Poles here present. Once again I greet the pilgrims, who have come together with their pastors for the beatification of my most beloved predecessor, Blessed John Paul II. May his entrustment to the Mother of God, contained in the invocation "Totus Tuus," be an encouragement for each one of you and for all the Polish people, for whom Mary is Queen....

[In Italian]

... The month of May has just begun, which in many parts of the world, the Christian people dedicate to Our Lady. Dear young people, place yourselves every day in the school of Mary Most Holy to learn from her to fulfill the will of God. Contemplating the Mother of Christ crucified, may you, dear sick, be able to accept the salvific value of all suffering lived together with Jesus. And you, dear newlyweds, invoke her maternal protection,

so that in your family life the climate of the house of Nazareth will always reign.

**"Believing Involves the Whole Person"- Words after a concert held in honor of the Pope's sixth anniversary as Pope, May 5, 2011**

... This evening's second masterpiece, the *Stabat Mater* by Gioacchino Rossini, is a great meditation on the mystery of the death of Jesus and on the profound sorrow of Mary. Rossini had ended the active phase of his career when he was only thirty-seven years old, in 1829, with *William Tell*. From this moment he no longer wrote pieces of vast proportions, with only two exceptions, both sacred music: the *Stabat Mater* and the *Petite Messe Solennelle*. Rossini's religious sense expressed a rich range of sentiments before the mysteries of Christ with a strong emotional tension. From the great initial fresco of the *Stabat Mater*, sorrowful and affectionate, to the passages in which the Rossinian and Italian lyrical quality emerges, but which are always dramatically tense, until the double final fugue with the powerful Amen, which expresses the firmness of faith, and the *In sempiterna saecula*, which seeks to convey the sense of eternity.

**"It Is Only from Christ That Humanity Can Receive Hope and a Future"- Greeting at Aquileia's Piazza Capitolò, May 7, 2011.**

... The One who came to enlighten the people with the light of the Truth had been born in the distant Province of Syria at the time of Caesar Augustus: Jesus, Son of Mary, the consubstantial and eternal Son of the Father, revealer of God's everlasting dominion over humankind, of his plan of communion for all the peoples.... May the Virgin Mary always protect you on your journey and may my blessing accompany you.

*"Share the Original Experience of Christianity  
... The Personal Encounter with Jesus"-*  
**Address in the Basilica of Aquileia to  
Organizers of Aquileia Congress to be held in  
2012, May 7, 2011.**

... I entrust you to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church,  
and to your holy Patrons, and with great affection I impart my  
Apostolic Blessing to all of you and your loved ones.

*"Preserve Harmony Between the Eyes of Faith  
and Reason" - Greeting in St. Mark's Square,  
Venice, May 7, 2011*

... As I entrust you to the maternal protection of  
Mary Most Holy, I invoke the Lord's Blessing  
upon this city, upon those who live in it, upon  
those who govern it and upon those who do their  
utmost to make it ever more worthy of God and of  
man. Thank you all and have a nice Sunday.

*"See Everything and Everyone with God's Eyes,  
in the Light of His Love"- Homily at Mass in  
Mestre's San Giuliano Park, May 8, 2011*

... This, brothers and sisters, is my hope; this is  
the prayer that I raise to God for all of you, as I  
invoke the heavenly intercession of the Virgin  
Mary and of the many Saints and Blesseds  
among whom I would like to recall St. Pius X and  
Bl. John XXIII and also Venerable Giuseppe  
Toniolo, whose Beatification is now at hand.  
These luminous Gospel witnesses are the  
greatest treasure of your region; follow their  
example and their teaching, combining it with the  
needs of the present day. Be confident: the  
Risen Lord is walking with you, yesterday, today  
and forever. Amen.

**On the Mother, Present with the Son: "If we  
Follow Her ... the Virgin Will Lead Us to Him" –  
Regina Coeli Address in Venice, May 8, 2011**

Dear brothers and sisters! At the end of this solemn Eucharistic Celebration, we turn our gaze to Mary, Regina Caeli. With the dawn of Easter she became the Mother of the Risen One and her union with him is so profound that there where the Son is present, the Mother cannot fail to be present. In these beautiful surroundings, gifts and signs of the beauty of God, how many shrines, churches and chapels are dedicated to Mary! In her the luminous face of Christ is reflected.

If we follow her with docility, the Virgin will lead us to him.

In these days of the Easter season let us allow ourselves to be conquered by the risen Christ. In him the new world of love and peace constitutes the profound aspiration of every human heart. May the Lord grant to you the inhabitants of these lands rich with a long Christian history, to live the Gospel on the model of the nascent Church, in which “the multitude of those who had come to the faith were of one heart and one soul” (Acts 4:32).

Let us invoke Mary Most Holy, who supported the first witnesses of her Son in preaching the Good News, that she might also today support the apostolic efforts of priests; make the witness of those in religious life fruitful; animate the daily work of parents in the first transmission of the faith to their children; illuminate the path of young people so that they might walk confidently in the way traced by their fathers; fill the hearts of the elderly with hope; comfort the sick and all of the suffering with her nearness; assist the work of numerous lay people who actively collaborate in the new evangelization, in parishes, in associations, such as Catholic Action, which is so deeply rooted and present in these lands; in the movements, which, in the variety of their charisms and their action, are a sign of the richness of the ecclesial fabric – I have in mind such groups as Focolare, Communion and Liberation and the

Neocatechumenal Way, to mention but a few. I encourage everyone to work with the true spirit of communion in this great vineyard in which the Lord has called us to work. Mary, Mother of the Risen One and of the Church, pray for us!

***"The Glory of God Is the Full Health of Man"-  
Address to World of Culture and of the  
economy at the Basilica of St. Mary of Health  
in Venice, May 8, 2011***

... We find ourselves at the "Polo della Salute" [the pole of health]: a new reality which nevertheless has ancient roots. Here, on the Punta della Dogana [Customs], one of the most famous of Venice's churches stands. It is a work of Longhena, built as a vow to Our Lady for liberation from the plague of 1630: Santa Maria della Salute. Beside it the famous architect built the Convent of the Somascans, which subsequently became the Patriarchal Seminary. "Unde origo, inde salus," reads the motto carved in the center of the largest roundel in the Basilica, a phrase that indicates how closely linked to the Mother of God is the origin of the City of Venice which tradition claims was founded on March 25, 421 the day of the Annunciation. And it was through Mary's intercession that health came, salvation from the plague. Yet reflecting on this motto we can also grasp another even deeper and broader meaning. From the Virgin of Nazareth came the One who gives us "salvation"....

***On the Universal Religious Sense: "Man  
Bears Within Himself the Desire for God"-  
General Audience, May 11, 2011***

... Finally, I address young people, the sick and newlyweds, exhorting all to intensify the pious practice of the holy rosary, especially in this month of May dedicated to the Mother of God. I invite you, dear young people, to value this



traditional Marian prayer, which helps to understand better and to assimilate the central moments of the salvation realized by Christ. I exhort you, dear sick, to turn with confidence to the Virgin Mary through this pious exercise, entrusting all your needs to her. I exhort you, dear newlyweds, to make the praying of the rosary in the family, a moment of spiritual growth under the gaze of the Virgin Mary.

***"In Love Man Is 'Re-created'" - Address to mark the thirtieth anniversary of the foundation of the John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and the Family, May 13, 2011***

... Dear friends, your institute is placed under the protection of the Madonna. Of Mary, Dante spoke illuminating words for a theology of the body: "In your womb love was rekindled" (*Paradiso* 23, 7). In her female body that Love that generates the Church took on a body. May the Mother of the Lord continue to protect your journey and to make fruitful your study and teaching, in service to the Church's mission for the family and society. May the Apostolic Benediction, which I bestow on all of you from my heart, accompany you. Thank you.

***"The Glory of God and the Sanctification of the Faithful" - Letter to Pontifical Institute of Sacred Music, May 13, 2011***

...For these important ends you can count on my constant solicitude, supported by a particular remembrance in prayer, which I entrust to the heavenly intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of Saint Cecilia, while wishing copious fruits from the centenary celebrations, I impart from my heart to you, to the director, to the professors, to the staff and to all the pupils of the Institute a special Apostolic Blessing.

***"New Problems and New Forms of Slavery ... Emerge in Our Time" - Words to Pontifical***

## **Missionary Societies, May 14, 2011**

... May the Holy Spirit, the protagonist of the Mission, guide us and sustain us always, through the intercession of Mary, Star of Evangelization and Queen of the Apostles.

## **On Workers for the Lord's Harvest: "*There Will Always Be a Need for Shepherds Who Announce the Word*" - Regina Coeli Address, May 15, 2011**

... Dear brothers and sisters, reinvigorated by Easter joy and faith in the Risen Christ, let us entrust our proposals and our intentions to the Virgin Mary, Mother of every vocation, that with her intercession she awaken and support numerous holy vocations in service to the Church and the world.

## **"*We Can Help Them to Find the Path to Keep Their Faith Alive*" - Appeal for the Church in China, May 18, 2011**

... Tuesday, 24 May, is dedicated to the liturgical memorial of Our Lady, Help of Christians, who is venerated with great devotion at the Shrine of Sheshan in Shanghai: the whole Church joins in prayer with the Church in China. There, as elsewhere, Christ is living out his passion. While the number of those who accept him as their Lord is increasing, there are others who reject Christ, who ignore him or persecute him: "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" (Acts 9:4). The Church in China, especially at this time, needs the prayers of the universal Church. In the first place, therefore, I invite all Chinese Catholics to continue and to deepen their own prayers, especially to Mary, the powerful Virgin. At the same time all Catholics throughout the world have a duty to pray for the Church in China: those members of the faithful have a right to our prayers, they need our prayers.

... With all of you I ask Mary to intercede that all

of them may be ever more closely conformed to Christ and may give themselves ever more generously to their brethren. I ask Mary to enlighten those who are in doubt, to call back the straying, to console the afflicted, to strengthen those who are ensnared by the allure of opportunism. Virgin Mary, Help of Christians, Our Lady of Sheshan, pray for us!

**"How Can We Remain Indifferent to Such Love"- Address to the Pontifical Theological Faculty Teresianum marking the seventy-fifth anniversary of its foundation, May 19, 2011**

... In this Eastertide, let us ask the Risen Lord for the gift of his Spirit, and we ask it sustained by the prayer of the Virgin Mary. May she, who in the Cenacle invoked with the Apostles the Paraclete, obtain for you the gift of wisdom of heart and attract a renewed effusion of heavenly gifts for the future that awaits you. By the intercession of the Mother of God and of Sts. Teresa of Jesus and John of the Cross, I impart from my heart to the community of the Teresianum and the whole Carmelite Family the Apostolic Blessing.

**On the Way, the Truth and the Life: "To Proclaim Jesus Christ ... Is the Main Task of the Church" – Regina Coeli Address, May 22, 2011**

... Dear friends, the commitment to proclaim Jesus Christ, "the way, the truth and the life" (John 14:6), is the main task of the Church. Let us invoke the Virgin Mary so that she will always assist the pastors and those who in the different ministries to proclaim the happy message of salvation, so that the Word of God is diffused and the number of disciples multiplied (cf. Acts 6:7).

**On Jacob's Wrestling with God: "He Who Allows Himself to Be Blessed by God ... Renders the World Blessed" – General**

## **Audience, May 25, 2011**

... Finally, I greet the young, the sick and newlyweds. Yesterday we celebrated the feast of the Madonna venerated under the title of Mary, Help of Christians. Mary helps us, dear young people, especially you alumni of the School of St. Vincent de Paul in Reggio Calabria, to affirm each day your faith in Christ. May she obtain comfort and serenity for you, dear sick. May she encourage you, dear newlyweds, to translate into daily life the commandment of love.

## *Mary's Life "Is a Call to Turn from What We Are to Hear and Accept the Word" - Papal Address at Rosary with Bishops on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the unification of Italy, May 27, 2011*

Venerable and dear brothers,

You have come to this splendid basilica -- a place where spirituality and art come together in a centuries-old union -- to share an intense moment of prayer, by which we entrust to the maternal protection of Mary, Mater Unitatis, the whole Italian nation, 150 years after the political union of the country. It is significant that this initiative was prepared by similar meetings in the dioceses: also in this way you express the solicitude of the Church in making herself close to the destiny of this beloved nation.

We, in turn, feel in communion with every community, including the smallest, in which the tradition of dedicating May to Marian devotion is alive. This tradition is expressed in many signs: shrines, chapels, works of art and, above all, in the prayer of the holy rosary, with which the People of God give thanks for the good they receive incessantly from the Lord, through the intercession of Mary Most Holy, and pray to her for their many needs.

Prayer -- which has its summit in the liturgy, whose form is guarded by the living tradition of the Church--is always leaving space for God: His action makes us participants in the history of salvation. This afternoon, in particular, in the school of Mary we have been invited to share in Jesus' steps: to go down with Him to the Jordan River, so that the Spirit will confirm in us the grace of baptism; to sit at the banquet of Cana, to receive from Him the "good wine" of the celebration; to enter the synagogue of Nazareth, as poor ones to whom is addressed the joyful message of the Kingdom of God; also to go up Mount Tabor, to receive the cross in the paschal light; and finally, to participate in the Cenacle in the new and eternal sacrifice that, anticipating the new heavens and the new earth, regenerates the whole of creation.

This basilica is the first dedicated to the Virgin Mother of God in the West. On entering it, my thoughts went back to the first day of the year 2000, when Blessed John Paul II opened the Holy Door, entrusting the Jubilee Year to Mary, so that she would watch over the path of all those who acknowledged themselves pilgrims of grace and mercy. We ourselves today do not hesitate to feel like pilgrims, desirous of crossing the threshold of that Most Holy Door that is Christ, and we want to ask the Virgin Mary to support our path and to intercede for us. As he is Son of God, Christ is the form of man: He is man's most profound truth, the sap that gives life to a history that otherwise would be irremediably impaired. Prayer helps us to recognize in Him the center of our life, to remain in His presence, to conform our will to His, to do "what He tells us" (John 2:5), certain of His fidelity. This is the essential task of the Church, crowned by Him as Mystical Bride, as we contemplate her in the splendor of the apse. Mary constitutes her model: she is the one who presents to us the mirror in which we are invited to recognize our identity. Her life is a call

to turn from what we are to hear and accept the Word, being able in faith to proclaim the greatness of the Lord, before which our only possible greatness is that expressed in filial obedience: "Be it done unto me according to thy word" (Luke 1:38). Mary trusted: she is the "blessed one" (cf. Luke 1:42), who is blessed for having believed (cf. Luke 1:45), to the point of having been clothed in Christ to such a degree that she enters in the "seventh day," a participant in God's rest. The dispositions of her heart -- listening, acceptance, humility, fidelity, praise and waiting -- correspond to the interior attitudes and to the gestures that mold Christian life. The Church is nourished by them, conscious that they express what God expects from her.

Engraved on the bronze of this basilica's Holy Door is a representation of the Council of Ephesus. The building itself, whose original nucleus dates back to the fifth century, is linked to that ecumenical summit held in the year 431. In Ephesus the united Church defended and confirmed for Mary the title Theotokos, Mother of God: a title with Christological content, which refers to the mystery of the Incarnation and which expresses the unity of the human nature with the divine in the Son. Moreover, it is the person and the experience of Jesus of Nazareth that illumines the Old Testament and Mary's face itself. Understood clearly in her is the unitary design that intertwines the two Testaments. In her personal life is the synthesis of the history of a whole nation, which places the Church in continuity with ancient Israel. Within this perspective individual histories receive meaning, beginning with those of the great women of the Old Covenant, in whose life is represented a humiliated, defeated and deported people. However, they are also the same ones who personify hope; they are the "holy remnant," a sign that God's plan does not remain an abstract idea, but finds correspondence in a pure answer, in a liberty that gives itself without holding

anything back, in a yes that is full acceptance and perfect gift. Mary is the highest expression of it. Upon her, Virgin, descends the creative power of the Holy Spirit, the same who "in the beginning" hovered over the shapeless abyss (cf. Genesis 1:1) and thanks to which God called being from nothing; the Spirit gives life to and molds creation. Opening to His action, Mary engenders the Son, the presence of God who comes to inhabit history and opens it to a new and definitive beginning, which is the possibility for every man to be reborn from on high, to live in the will of God and thus to be completely fulfilled.

[...]Despite all the difficulties, "nothing is impossible for God" (Luke 1:37), for him who continues doing "great things" (Luke 1:49) through all those who, like Mary, are able to give themselves to Him with unconditional availability. We place the whole Italian nation under the protection of the Mater Unitatis, so that the Lord will grant it the inestimable gifts of peace and fraternity and, hence, of development in solidarity. May she also help the political forces to live the anniversary of unity as an occasion to reinforce the national bond and to surmount every harmful opposition: may the various and legitimate sensibilities, experiences and perspectives come together again in a wider picture to seek together what truly contributes to the good of the country.

May Mary's example open the way to a more just, mature and responsible society, capable of rediscovering the profound values of the human heart. May the Mother of God encourage young people, sustain families, comfort the sick, implore upon each one a renewed effusion of the Spirit, helping us to recognize and also to follow the Lord in this time, who is the true good of life, because He is Life itself. From my heart I bless you and your communities.

*Nazi Power "Cast Doubt on the Future of*

***Christianity"- Address to to the Marianische Männer- Congregation "Mariä Verkündigung" (the Sodality of Our Lady), a Marian group from Regensburg, Germany, which he himself joined as a teenager. Marian Group of His Youth. May 28, 2011***

Dear Mr. President,

Dear Members of the Sodality,

A cordial "vergelt's Gott" [God reward you] for your visit, for the gift, for the fact of having drawn out of the past a forgotten moment of my life. In fact, it is a time that is not simply "in the past": admission in this Marian Congregation looks to the future, and it is never simply a time that passed. See, after seventy years, this moment is a time of "today," a time that indicates the way to "tomorrow." I am grateful for your having "pulled out" this time and I am happy.

[...] We had been admitted to the Congregation, but shortly after the war began against Russia, the seminary was dissolved, and the Congregation -- before it was reunited, before it succeeded in coming together again -- was already scattered to the four winds. Thus what was not considered an "exterior moment" of life nevertheless remained an "interior moment" of life, because it has always been clear that Catholicity cannot exist without a Marian expression, that to be Catholics means to be Marian, that this means love for the Mother, that in the Mother and by the Mother we find the Lord.

Here, through bishops' "ad limina" visits, I constantly witness how people -- above all in Latin America, but also on the other continents -- can entrust themselves to the Mother, can love the Mother and, through the Mother they learn to know, understand and love Christ. I see how the Mother continues entrusting the world to the Lord, how Mary continues to say "yes" and to



bring Christ into the world.

After the War, when we studied, the Mariology that was taught in the German universities was a bit austere and sober -- and I believe it has not changed much today; I do not think the situation is much improved. I believe, however, that we found the essential. At that time, we were oriented to Guardini and to the book of his friend, parish priest Josef Weiger, "*Maria, Mutter der Glaubenden*" (*Mary, Mother of Believers*), which referred to the words of Elizabeth: "Blessed are you who have believed!" (cf. Luke 1:45).

Mary is the great believer. She took up Abraham's mission to be a believer and made Abraham's faith concrete in faith in Jesus Christ, thus indicating to us the whole way of faith, the courage of entrusting ourselves to that God who gives Himself into our hands, the joy of being His witnesses; and then her determination to remain firm when all fled, the courage to be on the Lord's side when He seemed lost, and rendering precisely in this way that witness that led to Easter.

Therefore, I am pleased to know that in Bavaria there are about forty thousand members of the Sodality; that still today there are men who, together with Mary, love the Lord, men who, through Mary, learn to know and to love the Lord and, like her, give witness of the Lord in difficult hours and in happy hours; who are with him, under the cross and who continue to live Easter joyfully together with him. Hence, I thank all of you because you hold this witness high, because we know that there are Bavarian Catholic men who are in this Sodality, who journey on this path opened by the Jesuits in the sixteenth century, and who continue to demonstrate that faith does not belong to the past, but is always open to a "today" and, above all, to a "tomorrow."

**On the Joy the Gospel Brings: "*It Is Possible for Humanity to Know True Joy*" - Regina Caeli Address, May 29, 2011**

... Let us entrust both to the intercession of Mary Most Holy. May Christ's Mother accompany the proclamation of the Gospel always and everywhere, so that the spaces where men rediscover the joy of living as children of God will multiply and spread in the world.

[In Polish:]

... Yesterday was the thirtieth anniversary of the death of Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, Primate of the Millennium. Invoking the gift of his beatification, let us learn from him total abandonment to the Mother of God. May his trust expressed in the words: "I have put everything in Mary" be for us a particular model. We recall this at the end of the month of May dedicated in a particular way to Our Lady.

***"To Proclaim Jesus Christ ... Seems More Complex Today"* - Address to New Council on Evangelization at the conclusion of the council's first plenary assembly, Ma 30, 2011**

... Dear friends, invoking the intercession of Mary, Star of evangelization, so that she will accompany the bearers of the Gospel and open the hearts of those who listen, I assure you of my prayer for your ecclesial service and impart to all of you the apostolic blessing.

***"Love Is God's Gift to Humanity"* - Address to Indian Bishops on Five-yearly Visit, May 30, 2011**

...With these thoughts, dear Brother Bishops, I commend all of you to the intercession of Mary, Mother of the Church, and the Holy Apostles

Peter and Paul.

*"We Wish to Join Our Voices to Mary's, in Her Own Canticle of Praise"* - Meditation at Conclusion of Marian Month in the Vatican Gardens, May 31, 2011

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I am happy to join you in prayer, at the feet of the Holy Virgin, whom we contemplate today on the feast of the Visitation....

As conclusion of the month of May, we wish to join our voices to Mary's, in her own canticle of praise. With her we wish to praise the Lord for the wonders he continues to do in the life of the Church and of each one of us. In particular, it has been and continues to be for all of us a motive of great joy and gratitude, to have begun this Marian month with the memorable beatification of John Paul II....

Meditating today on Mary's Visitation, we are impelled to reflect on this courage of the faith. She whom Elizabeth received in her home is the Virgin who "believed" in the Angel's annunciation and responded with faith, accepting with courage the plan of God for her life and thus receiving, in herself, the Eternal Word of the Most High. As my Blessed Predecessor pointed out, in the encyclical "*Redemptoris Mater*," through the faith that Mary pronounced with her "fiat," "she abandoned herself to God without reservations and 'consecrated herself totally as the Lord's handmaid, in the person and the work of her Son'" (No. 13; cf., "*Lumen Gentium*," No. 56). Because of this, in her greeting Elizabeth exclaims: "Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled" (Luke 1:45).