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Pope Benedict XVI

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"The Environmental Condition That Most Favors Contemplation" - On Monastic Silence: CASTEL GANDOLFO, Italy, AUG. 13, 2011 (Zenit.org).

Here is a translation of the Italian-language catechesis Benedict XVI gave during the Aug. 10 general audience at the Apostolic Palace of Castel Gandolfo.

" And lastly, let us turn our gaze to the Virgin Mary, that she might teach us to love silence and prayer. ..."

"Bear Life's Adversities Courageously, Trusting in God" – On Storms and Tempests: CASTEL GANDOLFO, Italy, AUG. 13, 2011 (Zenit.org).

Here is a Vatican translation of the Italian-language address Benedict XVI delivered Aug. 7 before reciting the midday Angelus together with those gathered at the Apostolic Palace of Castel Gandolfo.

"...Let us call on the Virgin Mary, model of total entrustment to God, so that amidst the plethora of anxieties, problems and difficulties which churn up the sea of our life, may our hearts resonate with the reassuring words of Jesus who also says to us "Take heart, it is I; have no fear!"; and may our faith in him grow."

"Christ Is Attentive to Material Needs, But He Wished to Give More" :On Compassion and Sharing– CASTEL GANDOLFO, Italy, AUG. 13, 2011 (Zenit.org).

Here is a Vatican translation of the Italian-language address Benedict XVI delivered July 31 before reciting the midday Angelus together with those gathered at the Apostolic Palace of Castel Gandolfo.

"...Let us entrust our prayers to the Virgin Mary, so that she may open our hearts to compassion for our neighbor and to fraternal sharing."

"Mary Was the First to Take Into Her Arms the Son of God ... Now She Is the First to Be Next to Him" –On the Assumption:CASTEL GANDOLFO, Italy, AUG. 16, 2011 (Zenit.org).

Here is a translation of the address Benedict XVI gave Monday before and after praying the midday Angelus on the feast of the Assumption.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

At the heart of the month of August, Christians of the East and West celebrate jointly the Feast of the Assumption to Heaven of Mary Most Holy. In

the Catholic Church, the dogma of the Assumption -- as was noted -- was proclaimed during the Holy Year of 1950 by my venerable predecessor the Servant of God, Pope Pius XII. This memorial, however, sinks its roots in the faith of the early centuries of the Church.

In the East, the feast is still called today the "Dormition of the Virgin." In an ancient mosaic of the Basilica of St. Mary Major in Rome, which is inspired precisely in the Eastern icon of the "Dormition," the Apostles are pictured. Alerted by the angels of the earthly end of the Mother of Jesus, they gather around the Virgin's bed. At the center is Jesus who holds a little girl in his arms: It is Mary, become "little" for the Kingdom, and led by the Lord to Heaven.

In the passage of St. Luke's Gospel for today's liturgy, we read that "in those days Mary rose and went with haste into the hill country, to a city of Judah" (Luke 1:39). In those days Mary went in haste from Galilee to a small city near Jerusalem, to go and meet her cousin Elizabeth. Today we contemplate her going up to the mountain of God and entering into the heavenly Jerusalem, "clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars" (Revelation 12:1).

The biblical passage of Revelation, which we read in the liturgy of this solemnity, speaks of a fight between the woman and the dragon, between good and evil. St. John seems to propose to us the very first pages of the Book of Genesis, which narrate the dark and dramatic event of Adam's and Eve's sin. Our forefathers were defeated by the Evil One; in the fullness of time, Jesus, the new Adam, and Mary, the new Eve, defeated the enemy definitively, and this is the joy of this day! With Jesus' victory over evil, interior and physical death was also defeated. Mary was the first to take into her arms the Son of God, Jesus, who became a child; now she is the first to be next to

him in the glory of Heaven.

That which we celebrate today is a great mystery, and above all a mystery of hope and of joy for all of us: In Mary we see the end toward which all those who know how to link their lives to that of Jesus are journeying, those who know how to follow him as Mary did. This feast, then, speaks of our future, it tells us that we also will be next to Jesus in the joy of God and it invites us to have courage, to believe that the power of the Resurrection of Christ can operate also in us and make us men and women who every day seek to live as risen ones, taking the light of goodness to the darkness of evil that is in the world.

[After the Angelus, the Holy Father greeted the crowd in several languages. In French, he said:]

On this day of the feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, I joyfully greet the French-speaking pilgrims. "Today the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, was raised to the glory of heaven." She thus opens to us the path of hope. On contemplating her face, let us not hesitate to repeat our unconditional "yes" to the Lord. Following her example, on happy days as well as on difficult days, let us pray the Magnificat. May the Virgin Mary watch over the Church and all families.

[In English, he said:]

I offer a warm welcome to the English-speaking visitors gathered for this Angelus prayer on the Solemnity of the Assumption of Our Lady. May the example and prayers of Mary, Queen of Heaven, inspire and sustain us on our pilgrimage of faith, that we too may attain the glory of the Resurrection and the fulfillment of our hope in her Son's promises. Upon you and your families I invoke the Lord's richest blessings!

[In Spanish, he said:]

I greet affectionately the Spanish-speaking

pilgrims present at this Marian prayer. The solemnity of the glorious Assumption of the Virgin Mary, which we recall today, opens to us the hope of the plenitude of the life of heaven, which she has already reached and in which she awaits us. Through the loving intercession of the Mother of God, may abundant graces and blessings descend upon the Church and the world.

[In Portuguese, he said:]

Dear Portuguese-speaking pilgrims: welcome! On being raised to the glory of heaven, the Immaculate Virgin Mary becomes the dawn and image of the heavenly Church and a sign of consolation and hope for the pilgrim Church on earth. May the blessings of God descend upon you and upon your families through her maternal intercession.

[In Polish, he said:]

I greet cordially the Poles. To Mary assumed into heaven, Mother of God and of men, I entrust the whole Church in Poland. May Mary obtain for all believers and people of good will an abundance of gifts and graces. May all who have recourse to her enjoy her protection. Through her, may God bless you!"

"The Things of God Merit Haste"-Pope's Homily for Feast of Assumption: CASTEL GANDOLFO, Italy, AUG. 16, 2011 (Zenit.org).

Here is a translation of the homily Benedict XVI gave Monday when he celebrated Mass for the feast of the Assumption in the parish of St. Thomas of Villanova in Castel Gandolfo.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We are gathered once again to celebrate one of the oldest and most loved feasts dedicated to Mary Most Holy: the feast of her Assumption to the glory of heaven in soul and body, namely, in her whole human being, in the integrity of her

person. Thus we are given the grace to renew our love for Mary, to admire and praise her for the "great things" that the Almighty did for her and wrought in her.

On contemplating the Virgin Mary we are given another grace: that of also being able to see our lives in depth. Yes, because also our daily existence, with its problems and its hopes, receives light from the Mother of God, from her spiritual journey, from her destiny of glory: a journey and an end that can and must become, in some way, our own journey and our own end. We allow ourselves to be guided by passages of sacred Scripture that the liturgy proposes to us today. I would like to pause, in particular, on the image that we see in the first reading, treated by Revelation, which Luke's Gospel echoes, namely, that of the ark.

In the first reading, we heard: "then God's temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of the covenant was seen within the temple" (Revelation 11:19). What is the significance of the ark? What does it appear to be? For the Old Testament, it is the symbol of the presence of God in the midst of his people. But now the symbol has given way to reality. Thus the New Testament tells us that the true ark of the covenant is a living and concrete person: it is the Virgin Mary. God does not dwell in a piece of furniture, God dwells in a person, in a heart: Mary, she who bore in her womb the Eternal Son of God made man, Jesus Our Lord and Savior. In the ark -- as we know -- the two tablets of the law of Moses were kept, which manifested the will of God to maintain the covenant with his people, indicating to them the conditions to be faithful to God's pact, to conform themselves to the will of God and thus also to our most profound truth. Mary is the ark of the covenant, because she received Jesus in herself; she received the living Word in herself, the whole content of the will of God, of the truth of God; she received in herself him who is the new and eternal covenant,

culminating with the offering of His body and His blood: body and blood received from Mary. Christian piety is right, therefore, in the litanies in honor of Our Lady, to turn to her and to invoke her as Foederis Arca, that is "ark of the covenant," ark of the presence of God, ark of the covenant of love that God willed to fix definitively with the whole of humanity in Christ.

The passage of Revelation indicates another important aspect of the reality of Mary. She, living ark of the covenant, has a destiny of extraordinary glory, because she is so closely united to the Son whom she received in faith and generated in the flesh, to share fully the glory of heaven. This is what the words we heard suggest to us: "And a great portent appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars; she was with child ... she brought forth a male child, one who is to rule all the nations" (12:1-2; 5). The greatness of Mary, Mother of God, full of grace, fully docile to the action of the Holy Spirit, now lives in God's heaven with her whole self, soul and body. Referring to this mystery in a famous homily, St. John Damascene states: "Today the holy and unique Virgin is led to the heavenly temple Today the sacred ark animated by the living God, [the ark] that bore in the womb the Architect Himself, rests in the Lord's temple, not built by the hand of man" (Homily on the Dormition, 2, PG 96, 723). And he continues: "It was necessary that she who had housed in her womb the divine Logos, was transformed into the tabernacle of her Son. ... It was necessary that the Bride that the Father chose, dwell in the nuptial room of heaven" (Ibid., 14, PG 96. 742).

Today the Church sings the immense love of God for this, His creature: He chose her as true "ark of the covenant," as she who continues to generate and to give Christ the Savior to humanity, as she who in heaven shares the fullness of glory and enjoys the very happiness of God and, at the

same time, invites us also to become, in our modest way, an "ark" in which the Word of God is present, which is transformed and vivified by His presence, a place of God's presence, so that men may be able to see in their neighbor the closeness of God and thus live in communion with God and know the reality of heaven.

Luke's Gospel that we just heard (cf. Luke 1:39-56) shows us this living ark, which is Mary, in movement: having left her Nazareth home, Mary journeys to the mountains to reach in haste a city of Judah and to go to the home of Zechariah and Elizabeth. I think it is important to stress the expression "in haste": The things of God merit haste. Indeed the only things of the world that merit haste are in fact those of God, which have real urgency for our life. Then Mary entered this home of Zechariah and Elizabeth, but she did not go in alone. She entered bearing in her womb her Son, who is God Himself made man. Certainly she and her help were awaited in that home, but the Evangelist leads us to understand that this awaiting refers to another, more profound. Zechariah, Elizabeth and the small John the Baptist are, in fact, the symbol of all the righteous of Israel, whose heart, rich in hope, awaits the coming of the Messiah Savior. And it is the Holy Spirit who opens Elizabeth's eyes and makes her recognize in Mary the true ark of the covenant, the Mother of God, who comes to visit her. And thus the elderly cousin receives her exclaiming with "a loud cry": "Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" (Luke 1:42-43). And it is the Holy Spirit himself that before her who carries the God made man, opens the heart of John the Baptist in Elizabeth's womb. Elizabeth exclaims: "For behold, when the voice of your greeting came to my ears, the babe in my womb leaped for joy" (verse 44). Here the Evangelist Luke uses the

term "skirtan," namely "leap," the same term that we find in one of the ancient Greek translations of the Old Testament to describe the dance of King David before the holy ark that finally returned to the homeland (2 Samuel 6:16). John the Baptist dances in his mother's womb before the ark of the covenant, like David and thus recognizes that Mary is the new ark of the covenant, before whom the heart exults with joy, the Mother of God present in the world, who does not keep to herself this divine presence, but offers it sharing the grace of God. And thus -- as the prayer states -- Mary is really "cause of our joy," the "ark" in which the Savior is really present among us.

Dear brothers! We are speaking of Mary, but in a certain sense, we are speaking also of ourselves, of each one of us: We are also recipients of that immense love that God has reserved -- certainly, in an absolutely unique and unrepeatable way -- for Mary. In this solemnity of the Assumption we look at Mary: She opens us to hope, to a future full of joy and teaches us the way to reach it: to receive her Son in faith; never to lose our friendship with Him, but to allow ourselves to be illumined and guided by His word; to follow him every day, even in the moments in which we feel that our crosses are heavy. Mary, the ark of the covenant that is in the sanctuary of heaven, points out to us with luminous clarity that we are on the way to our true Home, to communion of joy and peace with God. Amen!"

"Consistency in Giving Time to God Is a Fundamental Element for Spiritual Growth"-On Meditation: CASTEL GANDOLFO, Italy, AUG. 17, 2011 (Zenit.org).

Here is a translation of the Italian-language catechesis Benedict XVI gave today during the general audience held at the papal summer residence in Castel Gandolfo.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We are still in the light of the Feast of the Assumption, which -- as I said -- is a feast of hope. Mary has arrived in heaven, and this is our destination: We can all reach heaven. The question is: How.

Mary has arrived there, "she" -- the Gospel says -- "who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord" (Luke 1:45). Therefore, Mary believed; she entrusted herself to God; she entered with her own [will] into the Lord's will, and thus it was that she truly took the most direct route on the road to heaven. To believe, to entrust oneself to the Lord, to enter into His will: This is the essential course.

Today, I do not wish to speak about the whole journey of faith, but only about a small aspect of the life of prayer, which is a life of contact with God; namely, about meditation. And what is meditation? It means to "remember" all that God has done and not to forget all His benefits (cf. Psalm 103:2b). Often, we see only the negative things. We also need to remember the good things, the gifts that God has given us; we need to be attentive to the positive signs that come from God, and remember these. Therefore, we are speaking about a kind of prayer that the Christian tradition calls "mental prayer." We are more familiar with vocal prayer, and naturally the mind and heart must also be present in this prayer, but today we are speaking about a meditation that consists not in words but in our mind making contact with the heart of God.

And here Mary is a true model. The Evangelist Luke repeats numerous times that Mary, for her part, "kept all these things, pondering them in her heart" (2:19; cf. 2:51). She keeps them; she does not forget. She is attentive to all that the Lord has said and done to her, and she ponders; that is,

she makes contact with diverse things -- she dwells deeply upon them in her heart.

She, therefore, who "believed" the announcement of the angel and became an instrument so that the Eternal Word of the Most High might become incarnate, also welcomed in her heart the wonderful miracle of the human-divine birth; she pondered it, she dwelt deeply upon all that God was doing in her, so that she might welcome the divine will in her life and conform to it. The mystery of the incarnation of God's Son, and of the maternity of Mary, is so great [a mystery] that it requires a process of interiorization. It is not only something physical that God accomplishes in her; rather, it is something that demands an interiorization from Mary, who seeks to understand it more deeply, seeks to interpret its meaning, to understand its implications. Thus, day after day, in the silence of ordinary life, Mary continued to keep in her heart the wondrous events she subsequently witnessed, even to the extreme trial of the Cross and the glory of the Resurrection. Mary fully lived her existence, her daily duties, her mission as mother, but she knew how to preserve within herself an interior space for reflection on the word and the will of God, on all that was occurring in her, on the mysteries of the life of her Son.

In our own time, we are absorbed with so many activities and commitments, concerns and problems.

Often, we tend to fill up all the spaces of the day, without having a moment to stop and reflect and to nourish our spiritual life -- our contact with God. Mary teaches us how necessary it is to find in our days-- with all their activities -- moments to recollect ourselves in silence and to ponder all that the Lord wants to teach us, how He is present and acts in the world and in our life: to be able to stop for a moment and meditate.

The holy rosary is also a prayer of meditation: In repeating the Hail Mary we are invited to think back and to reflect upon the mystery we have announced. ...

The Holy Father then greeted the people in various languages. In English, he said:

I offer a cordial welcome to all the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors here today, especially those from Malta, South Korea, Nigeria and Canada. Through the intercession of our Lady, whose Assumption we celebrated on Monday, may you and your loved ones draw ever closer to Jesus her Son. ..."

"Our Heart Must Live the Experience of Conversion Every Day"-On Nourishing Faith: CASTEL GANDOLFO, Italy, AUG. 16, 2011 (Zenit.org).

Here is a translation of the address Benedict XVI gave Sunday before and after praying the midday Angelus with those gathered at the pontifical summer residence in Castel Gandolfo

...We invoke the intercession of the Virgin Mary, whom tomorrow we will contemplate in her glorious Assumption to heaven in soul and body, so that she will help us to proclaim and to witness with our life the joy of having found the Lord.

...I greet affectionately the Italian pilgrims, in particular the faithful of Latina, gathered here with the pro "Stella Maris" torch. ..."

"Build Your Lives Upon the Firm Foundation Which Is Christ"-Pope's Response to Youth Welcome Ceremony: MADRID, Spain, AUG. 18, 2011 (Zenit.org).

Here is the second address that Benedict XVI delivered today at the welcome ceremony with the youth, held in Madrid's Cibeles Square.

"...I commend the fruits of this World Youth Day to the most holy Virgin Mary, who said "Yes" to the will of God, and teaches us a unique example of fidelity to her divine son, whom she followed to his death upon the Cross. Let us meditate upon this more deeply in the Stations of the Cross. And let us pray that, like her, our "Yes" to Christ today may also be an unconditional "Yes" to His friendship, both at the end of this Day and throughout our entire lives. Thank you very much."

Pope "Discovery of the Living God Inspires Young People"- Pope's Words Upon Arriving in Spain:MADRID, Spain, AUG. 18, 2011 (Zenit.org).

Here is the Vatican translation of the address Benedict XVI delivered today at the welcome ceremony, held at the State Pavilion of the Madrid-Barajas Airport, on the first day of his four-day trip to Spain.

"...Entrusting this meeting to the most holy Virgin Mary, and to the patron saints of this Day, I ask God always to bless and protect the sons and daughters of Spain...."

"The Cross Was Not a Sign of Failure, but an Expression of Self-Giving in Love"-Benedict XVI's Reflection on Way of the Cross:MADRID, Spain, AUG. 19, 2011 (Zenit.org).

Here is the address Benedict XVI delivered at the end of a celebration of the Way of the Cross with young people at Plaza de Cibeles. The event is part of the twenty-sixth World Youth Day, which is under way through Sunday.

"...Let us turn our gaze now to the Virgin Mary, who was given to us on Calvary to be our Mother, and let us ask her to sustain us with her loving protection along the path of life, particularly when we pass through the night of suffering, so that we

may be able to remain steadfast, as she did, at the foot of the Cross."

"You Provide a Splendid Service in the Spread of Truth"-Holy Father's Words to University Professors: MADRID, Spain, AUG. 19, 2011 (Zenit.org).

Here is a Vatican translation of the address Benedict XVI delivered today upon addressing a gathering of young university professors at the Basilica of the Monastery of San Lorenzo de El Escorial in Madrid. The Pope is in the Spanish capital to preside at the twenty-sixth World Youth Day, which is under way through Sunday.

"...I invoke upon you the protection of the Virgin Mary, Seat of Wisdom. May she help you to cooperate with her Son by living a life which is personally satisfying and which brings forth rich fruits of knowledge and faith for your students."

"We Need That Radicalism to Which Your Consecration ... Bears Witness"-Pontiff's Address to Young Women Religious: MADRID, Spain, AUG. 19, 2011 (Zenit.org).

Here is a Vatican translation of the address Benedict XVI delivered today upon addressing a gathering of young women religious at the Monastery of San Lorenzo de El Escorial in Madrid. The Pope is in the Spanish capital to preside at the twenty-sixth World Youth Day, which is under way through Sunday.

"...I pray that the Virgin Mary may sustain and accompany your consecrated youth, with the lively desire that it will challenge, nourish and illumine all young people."

"We Have to Be Saints"-Papal Homily at Mass With Seminarians: MADRID, Spain, AUG. 20, 2011 (Zenit.org).

Here is a Vatican translation of the homily

Benedict XVI gave today when he celebrated Mass with seminarians during the context of the twenty-sixth World Youth Day, under way in Madrid.

"...look above all to the Virgin Mary, Mother of Priests. She will know how to mould your hearts according to the model of Christ, her divine Son, and she will teach you how to treasure forever all that He gained on Calvary for the salvation of the world. Amen."

"The Lives of These Young People Surely Touch Human Hearts"-Pope's Address to Youth With Illnesses and Disabilities: MADRID, Spain, AUG. 20, 2011 (Zenit.org).

Here is a Vatican translation of the address Benedict XVI gave today upon his visit to the Foundation of Saint Joseph's Institute.

"...Jesus and, in his footsteps, His Sorrowful Mother and the saints, are witnesses who shows us how to experience the tragedy of suffering for our own good and for the salvation of the world, ..."

"The World Needs the Witness of Your Faith, It Surely Needs God"-Pope's Homily at Closing Youth Day Mass: MADRID, Spain, AUG. 21, 2011 (Zenit.org).

Here is a Vatican translation of the words Benedict XVI delivered today before and during the closing Mass of the 2011 World Youth Day, held at Cuatro Vientos Air Base in Madrid.

"...I commend all of you to the Virgin Mary and I ask her to accompany you always by her maternal intercession and to teach you how to remain faithful to God's word."

"Spread Throughout the World the Profound and Joyful Experience of Faith"-Benedict XVI's Farewell Address to Spain: MADRID, Spain, AUG. 21, 2011 (Zenit.org).

Here is a Vatican translation of the address Benedict XVI delivered today at the departure ceremony of the Pope's visit to Spain, held at the International Airport of Madrid Barajas. The Holy Father was in the nation's capital to preside at the twenty-sixth World Youth Day.

"...I entrust the sons and daughters of this noble land to the intercession of the Virgin Mary, our heavenly Mother, and to them all I willingly impart my blessing."

"The Cross of Christ Gives Much More Than It Demands"-On World Youth Day 2011: CASTEL GANDOLFO, Italy, AUG. 24, 2011 (Zenit.org).

Here is a translation of the Italian-language catechesis Benedict XVI gave today during the general audience held at Castel Gandolfo.

"...I entrust the fruits of this day to the maternal intercession of Mary."

"To Think According to the World Is to Put God Aside"-On Thinking Like God and Accepting the Cross: CASTEL GANDOLFO, Italy, AUG. 28, 2011 (Zenit.org).

Here is a translation of the address Benedict XVI gave today before praying the midday Angelus with crowds that gathered at Castel Gandolfo.

"...We entrust our prayer to the Virgin Mary and to St. Augustine, whose memorial is today, so that each one of us will be able to follow the Lord on the way of the cross and allow ourselves to be transformed by divine grace, renewing our way of

thinking, so that we "may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect" (Romans 12:2)."

Art "Is like a Door Opened to the Infinite"-On Beauty as a Way to God: CASTEL GANDOLFO, Italy, AUG. 31, 2011 (Zenit.org).

Here is a translation of the Italian-language catechesis Benedict XVI gave today during the general audience.

"...In 1886, the famous French poet, playwright and diplomat Paul Claudel entered the Basilica of Notre Dame in Paris and there felt the presence of God precisely in listening to the singing of the Magnificat during the Christmas Mass. He had not entered the church for reasons of faith; indeed, he entered looking for arguments against Christianity, but instead the grace of God changed his heart."