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### Homily by the Most Reverend Edward D. Head, Bishop of Buffalo, June 1, 1988

Edward D. Head

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**HOMILY BY**  
**THE MOST REVEREND EDWARD D. HEAD,**  
**BISHOP OF BUFFALO**

My Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

In his encyclical letter, *Redemptoris Mater*, our Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, reflects on the motherhood of Mary. He speaks of the relationship of mother and child as "unique and unrepeatable." He describes this personal relationship as of "the very essence of motherhood." In experiencing the mother's love, the "child's development and coming to maturity as a human being" are assured. How true these words are from the dimension of human psychology! How true these words are as we reflect upon our spiritual growth as sons and daughters of Mary.

My development in my spiritual life and my efforts to grow in faith are very intimately connected with my personal love and devotion to Mary. I remember so clearly, as a young boy growing up in New York City, joining with my parents and two brothers for the recitation of the rosary. It was there that a bond of love with Mary—our Mother, the Seat of Wisdom—began. That devotion remained with me through my seminary years. It was a part of my life as a young priest, and it remains an integral component of my spiritual life today. It is a relationship that reflects so clearly the description of our Holy Father; it is unique and unrepeatable, a relationship that clearly calls me to full stature in Christ Jesus.

We honor Mary today under her title "Seat of Wisdom." She is the one who teaches us not to "seek the folly of the wise but rather the loving service that marks out the poor in spirit." We see Mary prefigured in the words of the author of the Book of Proverbs: she was with the Father when the

heavens were established; she was uniquely chosen from all eternity. In honoring Mary as the Seat of Wisdom, we celebrate her maternal role as that wisdom became incarnate in her womb. We celebrate her royal dignity, because the child on her lap is the Messianic King. He is the King visited by the Wise Men coming from afar, the Wise Men who find Jesus with His mother and offer Him royal gifts. She is the one who helps us to know Jesus in truth and to love and serve Him with fidelity.

But now—much more personally—what does Mary, Seat of Wisdom, mean to all of us? What does she teach? What can we learn?

For me—and, I am sure, for all of you—Mary, Seat of Wisdom, teaches us to trust, even in the midst of confusion and uncertainty. Can you imagine the chaos in the mind and heart of that young maiden of Nazareth when, at a very young age, she was asked to be the Mother of the Redeemer? She was pregnant, unmarried, fear-filled, and uncertain. Yet, she responds with total trust, total faith, total serenity. It is that kind of trust in God that she teaches; it is that kind of confidence in God that we need—as we journey through the joys and sorrows, the successes and failures, the pleasures and pains of our own earthly pilgrimages. Mary, Seat of Wisdom, is our model. She teaches us to trust in the Lord.

And my love of Mary has taught me other things as well. Mary has reminded me of what real wisdom is. True wisdom is choosing the better part, the most noble part, the most pleasing part. In the Gospel, Mary is always found serving others: journeying to be with Elizabeth, assisting the embarrassed bride and groom at Cana, comforting her Son in His final agony. Mary—always the servant, always wise enough to offer herself in service to others—Mary, Servant of the Lord, has taught me and taught you to be attentive to the needs of others, to respond to all with compassion, gentleness and kindness—especially to those who are powerless and poor.

There is another lesson I have learned. Mary lived in the

presence of her Lord; she was full of grace. To live in the presence of God, to be constantly aware of the closeness of God—this Mary also teaches us, as her sons and daughters. She teaches us to hear the Word of God and to make it flesh in our lives, to be women and men of prayer, to speak continually to God from our hearts, to be open to the will of God. She is the Seat of Wisdom for all of us who want to grow in holiness and grace.

Pope John Paul has said that Christian people have always "sensed a profound link between devotion to the Blessed Virgin and worship of the Eucharist. . . . Mary guides the faithful to the Eucharist." Today, Mary—in her wisdom—asks us to join together to celebrate Eucharist at this altar table. Mary always brings us to Jesus—Jesus Who is present in His Word, Jesus Who will come to us soon in His Body and Blood, Jesus Who will remain with us always. As we go back to our dioceses, to our ministries, to our services, we will be wiser women and men, because Mary, Seat of Wisdom, has opened our minds and our hearts to her Son.

I am so pleased that the Diocese of Buffalo has been the host of this convention of the Mariological Society of America during this Marian Year. Your presence encourages all of us to make devotion to Mary a vital and essential part of our personal and ecclesial spirituality. I pray with you this afternoon that Mary—the Seat of All Wisdom—will teach us how to trust in God more deeply, how to serve others more generously, how to love God more profoundly.

Mary, Seat of Wisdom, pray for us!

*Christ the King Seminary  
June 1, 1988*