



The Holy See

PASTORAL VISIT

OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

TO SAVONA AND GENOA (LIGURIA) EUCHARISTIC CONCELEBRATION HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

*Piazza della Vittoria, Genoa
Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity
Sunday, 18 May 2008*

Dear Brothers and Sisters, At the end of a full day spent in your City, we are gathered around the altar to celebrate the Eucharist on the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity. From this central square, Piazza della Vittoria, which welcomes us for the communal service of praise and thanksgiving to God with which my Pastoral Visit concludes, I extend my most cordial greeting to the entire Civil and Ecclesial Community of Genoa. I first greet with affection the Archbishop, Cardinal Angelo Bagnasco, whom I thank for the courtesy with which he welcomed me and for his touching words at the beginning of Holy Mass. Then how can I omit greeting Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, my Secretary of State, former Pastor of this ancient and noble Church? My most cordial thanks to him for his spiritual closeness and his precious collaboration. I next greet Auxiliary Bishop Luigi Ernesto Palletti, the Bishops of Liguria and the other Prelates. I address my respectful thoughts to the Civil Authorities to whom I am grateful for their welcome and the effective support they have lent to the preparations for and execution of this Apostolic Pilgrimage. In particular, I greet Minister Claudio Scaiola, representing the new Government, who in these very days has assumed his full functions at the service of the beloved Italian Nation. I then address with deep gratitude the priests, men and women religious, the deacons, committed lay people, the seminarians and young people. My affectionate greeting to you all, dear brothers and sisters. I extend my thoughts to those who were unable to be present and especially to the sick, to the people who are alone and to all who are in difficulty. I entrust the City of Genoa and all its inhabitants to the Lord at this solemn Eucharistic concelebration which, as on every Sunday, invites us to take part as a community in the double table of the Word of Truth and the Bread of Eternal Life. In the First Reading (Ex 34: 4b-6, 8-9) we heard a biblical text that presents to us the revelation of God's Name. It is God himself, Eternal and Invisible, who proclaims it, passing before Moses in the cloud

on Mount Sinai. And his Name is: "The Lord, a God merciful, and compassionate, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness". In the New Testament St John sums up this sentence in a single word: "Love" (cf. I Jn 4: 8, 16). Today's Gospel also testifies to this: "God so loved the world that he gave his Only Son" (Jn 3: 16). Consequently this Name clearly expresses that the God of the Bible is not some kind of monad closed in on itself and satisfied with his own self-sufficiency but he is life that wants to communicate itself, openness, relationship. Words like "merciful", "compassionate", "rich in grace" all speak to us of a relationship, in particular, of a vital Being who offers himself, who wants to fill every gap, every shortage, who wants to give and to forgive, who desires to establish a solid and lasting bond. Sacred Scripture knows no other God than the God of the Covenant who created the world in order to pour out his love upon all creatures (cf. Roman Missal, Eucharistic Prayer IV) and chose a people with which to make a nuptial pact, to make it become a blessing for all the nations and so to form a great family of the whole of humanity (cf. Gn 12: 1-3; Ex 19: 3-6). This revelation of God is fully delineated in the New Testament though the word of Christ. Jesus showed us the Face of God, one in Essence and Triune in Persons: God is Love, Father Love - Son Love - Holy Spirit Love. And it is precisely in this God's Name that the Apostle Paul greets the Community of Corinth: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God [the Father] and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all" (II Cor 13: 14). There is contained, therefore, in these Readings, a principal that regards God and in effect today's Feast invites us to contemplate him, the Lord. It invites us in a certain sense to scale "the mountain" as Moses did. This seems at first sight to take us far from the world and its problems but in fact one discovers that it is precisely by coming to know God more intimately that one receives fundamental instructions for this our life: something like what happened to Moses who, climbing Sinai and remaining in God's presence, received the law engraved on stone tablets from which the people drew the guidance to continue, to find freedom and to form themselves as a people in liberty and justice. Our history depends on God's Name and our journey on the light of his Face. From this reality of God which he himself made known to us by revealing his "Name" to us comes a certain image of man, that is, the exact concept of the person. If God is a dialogical unity, a being in relation, the human creature made in his image and likeness reflects this constitution: thus he is called to fulfil himself in dialogue, in conversation, in encounter. In particular, Jesus has revealed to us that man is essentially a "son", a creature who lives in the relationship with God the Father, and in this way in relationship with all his brothers and sisters. Man is not fulfilled in an absolute autonomy, deceiving himself that he is God but, on the contrary, by recognizing himself as a child, an open creature, reaching out to God and to his brethren in whose faces he discovers the image of their common Father. One can easily see that this concept of God and man is at the base of a corresponding model of the human community, and therefore of society. It is a model that comes before any normative, juridical or institutional regulations but I would say even before cultural specifications. It is a model of the human family transversal to all civilizations, which we Christians express confirming that human beings are all children of God and therefore all brothers and sisters. This is a truth that has been behind us from the outset and at the same time is always before us, like a project to strive for in every social construction. The Magisterium of the Church which has developed from this vision of God and of man is a very rich

one. It suffices to run through the most important chapters of the Social Doctrine of the Church, to which my venerable Predecessors have made substantial contributions, especially in the past 120 years, making themselves authoritative interpreters and guides of the social movement of Christian inspiration. Here I would like to mention only a recent *Pastoral Note* of the Italian Episcopate: "*Rigenerati per una speranza viva: Testimoni del grande 'sì' di Dio all'uomo*" [Regenerated by a living hope: witnesses of God's great "yes" to man] (29 June 2007). This Note proposes two priorities. First of all, the choice of the "primacy of God": all the Church's life and work depend on putting God in first place, not a generic God but rather the Lord with his Name and his Face, the God of the Covenant who brought the people out of slavery in Egypt, who raised Christ from the dead and who wants to lead humanity to freedom in peace and justice. The other choice is to put the person and the unity of his life at the centre, in the various contexts in which he is deployed: emotional life, work and celebration, in his own fragility, tradition and citizenship. The Triune God and the person in relationship: these are the two references that the Church has the duty to offer to every human generation as a service to build a free and supportive society. The Church certainly does so with her doctrine, but above all through her witness which, with reason, is the third fundamental choice of the Italian Episcopate: personal and community witness in which the spiritual life, pastoral mission and the cultural dimension converge. In a society fraught between globalization and individualism, the Church is called to offer a witness of *koinonìa*, of communion. This reality does not come "from below" but is a mystery which, so to speak, "has its roots in Heaven", in the Triune God himself. It is he, in himself, who is the eternal dialogue of love which was communicated to us in Jesus Christ and woven into the fabric of humanity and history to lead it to fullness. And here then is the great synthesis of the Second Vatican Council: the Church, mystery of communion, "in Christ is in the nature of sacrament - a sign and instrument, that is, of communion with God and of unity among all men" (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, n. 1). Here too, in this great City, as well as in its territory with the variety of the respective human and social problems, the Ecclesial Community, today as yesterday, is first of all the sign, poor but true, of God Love whose Name is impressed in the depths of the being of every person and in every experience of authentic sociability and solidarity. After these reflections, dear brothers and sisters, I leave you some special exhortations. Take care of spiritual and catechetical formation, a "substantial" formation that is more necessary than ever to live the Christian vocation well in today's world. I say to adults and young people: foster a thought-out faith that can engage in profound dialogue with all, with our non-Catholic brethren, with non-Christians and with non-believers. Continue your generous sharing with the poor and the weak, in accordance with the Church's original praxis, always drawing inspiration and strength from the Eucharist, the perennial source of charity. With special affection I encourage seminarians and young people involved in a vocational journey: do not be afraid; indeed, may you feel the attraction of definitive choices, of a serious and demanding formative process. The high standard of discipleship alone fascinates and gives joy. I urge all to grow in the missionary dimension which is co-essential to communion. Indeed, the Trinity is at the same time unity and mission: the more intense love is, the stronger is the urge to pour it out, to spread it, to communicate it. Church of Genoa, be united and missionary to proclaim to all the joy of faith and the beauty of being God's Family. My thought extends to the

entire City, to all the Genoese and to all who live and work in this territory. Dear friends, look to the future with confidence and seek to build it together, avoiding factiousness and particularism, putting the common good before your own specific legitimate interests. I would like to conclude with a wish that I have taken from the stupendous prayer of Moses which we heard in the First Reading: let the Lord always walk in the midst of you and make you his heritage (cf. Ex 34: 9). May the intercession of Mary Most Holy, whom the Genoese, at home and throughout the world, invoke as the Madonna della Guardia obtain this for you. With her help and that of the Holy Patrons of your beloved City and Region, may your faith and works always be in praise and glory of the Most Holy Trinity. Following the example of the Saints of this earth, be a missionary community: listening to God and at the service of men and women! Amen.

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