



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
ON THE OCCASION OF THE XIX PUBLIC SESSION
OF THE PONTIFICAL ACADEMIES**

[Multimedia]

To Venerable Brother

Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi

President of the Pontifical Council for Culture and of the Coordinating Council of the Pontifical Academies

I address my cordial greeting to those participating in the 19th Public Session of the Pontifical Academies, dedicated to the theme “Mary, icon of the infinite beauty of *Dios Marialis Cultus* and the Mariological and Marian Magisterium of Blessed Paul VI”. Your meeting, organized by the Pontifical International Marian Academy, recalls the unforgettable figure of my venerable Predecessor, Blessed [Paul VI](#), and his great love for the Virgin Mary, expressed in so many moments of his Pontificate as well as in numerous Documents.

Indeed, after carefully proceeding with the formulation of Chapter VIII of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church [Lumen Gentium](#), in which he focused conciliar reflections on Our Lady, contemplated “*in mysterio Christi et Ecclesiae*”, he wished to dedicate to the Mother of God, and also to the worship addressed to her as *Mater Ecclesiae*, two Encyclical Letters, [Mense Maio](#) and [Christi Matri](#). Likewise, three of his Apostolic Exhortations are dedicated to Mary as well: [Signum Magnum](#), [Recurrens Mensis October](#) and lastly, [Marialis Cultus](#), a document which you aptly commemorated 40 years after its publication.

It is truly beautiful that, on the eve of the 50th anniversary of the closing of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, established by Paulvi, by no coincidence on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of Mary (8 December 1965), you wish to make her voice resound by offering footage of the homily in which he entrusted to Mary the fate of the Church, profoundly renewing herself in

the Council. On that solemn and historical occasion, Blessed Paul VI wished to declare, to the Church as a whole, Mary as “the Mother of God and as our spiritual Mother”. And he added: “Is it not perhaps by fixing our gaze on this humble Woman, our Sister and at the same time our heavenly Mother and Queen, the flawless and sacred mirror of infinite Beauty, that our conciliar spiritual ascension and this final farewell may be complete and that our post-Conciliar work could begin? Does this beauty of Immaculate Mary not become for us an inspirational model? A comforting hope?”. The same Pontiff, 10 years later, on 16 May 1975, intervening at the Mariological and Marian Congresses announced in Rome by the Pontifical International Marian Academy on the occasion of the Jubilee Year, wishing to be a promoter, both in the area of Mariological research and in popular piety, of the *via pulchritudinis*, the research trajectory which begins by the discovery and admiration of Mary’s beauty, grasped as the reflection of the infinite beauty of God Himself.

In crucial and difficult moments for the Church and for humanity, Paul VI always turned to Mary, exhorting the People of God to ask for her intercession and protection. He invoked from her above all the gift of peace. The heartfelt words of the Encyclical Letter *Mense Maio* are more timely than ever: “Let us offer our pleas to the Mother of God with greater devotion and confidence, so that we may obtain her favor and her blessings.... May she who experienced the cares and hardships of earthly life, the weariness of daily toil, the hardships and trials of poverty, and the sorrows of Calvary, come to aid the needs of the Church and the human race. May she graciously lend an ear to the devout pleas of those all over the world who beg her for peace. May she enlighten the minds of those who rule nations. And finally, may she prevail on God, who rules the winds and storms, to calm the tempests in men’s warring hearts and *grant us peace in our day*. What we seek is true peace grounded on the sturdy foundations of justice and love” (nn. 11, 12).

Following the Synod of Bishops on the New Evangelization, in the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, I too entrusted the journey of the Church to the maternal and attentive intercession of Mary, recalling to all believers that “there is a Marian ‘style’ to the Church’s work of evangelization. Whenever we look to Mary, we come to believe once again in the revolutionary nature of love and tenderness. In her we see that humility and tenderness are not virtues of the weak but of the strong who need not treat others poorly in order to feel important themselves.... This interplay of justice and tenderness, of contemplation and concern for others, is what makes the ecclesial community look to Mary as a model of evangelization” (n. 288).

Thus, let us not tire of learning from Mary, of admiring and contemplating her beauty, of allowing ourselves to be guided by Her, who always leads us to the original source and to the fullness of genuine, infinite beauty, that of God, revealed to us in Christ, Son of the Father and Son of Mary.

Wishing to encourage and support those who are committed to offering a serious and valid contribution to Mariological research, and especially to that which travels and examines the *via pulchritudinis*, I am pleased to award the Prize of the Pontifical Academies to the *Italian*

Interdisciplinary Mariological Association, above all for the now 20-year publication of the journal *Theotokos*. As a sign of encouragement for the precious work performed with passion on a pastoral level, I then present the Pontifical Medal to the *Marian Centre for Cultural Diffusion* of the Servants of Mary operating in Mexico.

Lastly, I wish for the Academics and all those present a productive commitment in your respective fields of research, and I entrust each one to the maternal protection of Mary, the *Tota Pulchra*, while I impart a heartfelt and special Apostolic Blessing.

From the Vatican, 20 November 2014

FRANCIS