



The Holy See

HOMAGE OF THE HOLY FATHER
TO THE IMMACULATE IN "PIAZZA DI SPAGNA"

PRAYER OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

Thursday, 8 December 2005

On this day dedicated to Mary I have come, for the first time as Successor of Peter, to the feet of the statue of the Immaculate here in *Piazza di Spagna*, ideally continuing the Pilgrimage made many times by my Predecessors. I feel that I am accompanied by the devotion and affection of the Church living in this city of Rome and in the entire world. I bring with me the concerns and hopes of present-day humanity and come to lay them at the feet of the heavenly Mother of the Redeemer.

On this remarkable day, the 40th anniversary of the closing of the Second Vatican Council, my thought goes to 8 December 1965 when, exactly at the end of the Homily during the Eucharistic celebration in St Peter's Square, the Servant of God Paul VI addressed his thought to Mary, "the Mother of God and our spiritual Mother..., the creature in whom the image of God is reflected with absolute clarity, without any disturbance as happens in every other human creature".

The Pope then asked: "Is it not perhaps in directing our gaze on this woman who is our humble sister and at the same time our heavenly Mother and Queen, the spotless and sacred mirror of infinite beauty, that we can... [begin] our post-conciliar work? Does not the beauty of Mary Immaculate become for us an inspiring model, a comforting hope?".

He then concluded: "...we think it is so for us and for you. And this is our most exalted and, God willing, our most valuable parting wish" (*cf. The Teachings of Pope Paul VI*, III, 1965).

Recalling the many events that have marked the last 40 years, how can we not relive today the various moments that have highlighted the Church's journey in this period?

Mary sustained the Pastors, and in the first place the Successors of Peter, in their demanding

ministry at the service of the Gospel during these 40 years; she guided the Church towards the faithful understanding and application of the conciliar Documents.

For this reason, serving as spokesperson for the entire Ecclesial Community, I wish to thank the Most Holy Virgin and I turn to her with the same sentiments that animated the Council Fathers, who dedicated to Mary the last chapter of the Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, underlining the inseparable relationship that unites the Virgin to the Church.

Yes, we want to thank you, Virgin Mother of God and our most beloved Mother, for your intercession for the good of the Church. You, who in embracing the divine will without reserve were consecrated with all of your energies to the person and work of your Son, teach us to keep in our heart and to meditate in silence, as you did, upon the mysteries of Christ's life.

May you who reached Calvary, ever-deeply united to your Son who from the Cross gave you as mother to the disciple John, also make us feel you are always close in each moment of our lives, especially in times of darkness and trial.

You, who at Pentecost, together with the Apostles in prayer, called upon the gift of the Holy Spirit for the newborn Church, help us to persevere in the faithful following of Christ. To you, a "sign of certain hope and comfort", we trustfully turn our gaze "until the day of the Lord shall come" (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 68).

You, Mary, are invoked with the insistent prayer of the faithful throughout the world so that you, exalted above all the angels and saints, will intercede before your Son for us, "until all families of peoples, whether they are honoured with the title of Christian or whether they still do not know the Saviour, may be happily gathered together in peace and harmony into one People of God, for the glory of the Most Holy and Undivided Trinity" (ibid., n. 69). Amen.

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