



The Holy See

PASTORAL VISIT
OF HIS HOLINESS POPE BENEDICT XVI
IN POLAND

ADDRESS BY THE HOLY FATHER

**ENCOUNTER WITH MEN AND WOMEN RELIGIOUS, SEMINARIANS
AND REPRESENTATIVES OF ECCLESIAL MOVEMENTS**

Częstochowa, 26 May 2006

*Dear men and women religious, consecrated persons,
who moved by the voice of Jesus, have followed him out of love!*

*Dear seminarians,
who are preparing yourselves for the priestly ministry!*

*Dear representatives of ecclesial movements,
who bring the power of the Gospel to your families, to your workplaces, to universities, to the world
of the media and culture, to your parishes!*

Just as the Apostles together with Mary “went to the upper room” and there “with one accord devoted themselves to prayer” (Acts 1:12,14), so we too have come together today at Jasna Góra, which for us at this hour is the “upper room” where Mary, the Mother of the Lord, is among us. Today it is she who leads our meditation; she teaches us how to pray. Mary shows us how to open our minds and our hearts to the power of the Holy Spirit, who comes to us so as to be brought to the whole world. I would like to offer cordial greetings to the Archdiocese of Częstochowa together with its Pastor, Archbishop Stanisław, and Bishops Antoni and Jan. I thank all of you for coming together to pray.

My dear friends, we need a moment of silence and recollection to place ourselves in her school, so that she may teach us how to live from faith, how to grow in faith, how to remain in contact with the mystery of God in the ordinary, everyday events of our lives. With feminine tact and with “the ability to combine penetrating intuition with words of support and encouragement” (John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater*, 46), Mary sustained the faith of Peter and the Apostles in the Upper Room, and today she sustains my faith and your faith.

“Faith is contact with the mystery of God”, to quote Pope John Paul II (*Redemptoris Mater*, 17), because “to believe means ‘to abandon oneself’ to the truth of the word of the living God, knowing and humbly recognizing ‘how unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways’” (*ibid.*, 14). Faith is the gift, given to us in Baptism, which makes our encounter with God possible. God is hidden in mystery; to claim to understand him would mean to want to confine him within our thinking and knowing and consequently to lose him irremediably. With faith, however, we can open up a way through concepts, even theological concepts, and can “touch” the living God. And God, once touched, immediately gives us his power. When we abandon ourselves to the living God, when in humility of mind we have recourse to him, a kind of hidden stream of divine life pervades us. How important it is to believe in the power of faith, in its capacity to establish a close bond with the living God! We must give great attention to the development of our faith, so that it truly pervades all our attitudes, thoughts, actions and intentions. Faith has a place, not only in our state of soul and religious experiences, but above all in thought and action, in everyday work, in the struggle against ourselves, in community life and in the apostolate, because it ensures that our life is pervaded by the power of God himself. Faith can always bring us back to God even when our sin leads us astray.

In the Upper Room the Apostles did not know what awaited them. They were afraid and worried about their own future. They continued to marvel at the death and resurrection of Jesus and were in anguish at being left on their own after his ascension into Heaven. Mary, “she who believed in the fulfilment of the Lord’s words” (cf. *Lk* 1:45), assiduous in prayer alongside the Apostles, taught perseverance in the faith. By her own attitude she convinced them that the Holy Spirit, in his wisdom, knew well the path on which he was leading them, and that consequently they could place their confidence in God, giving themselves to him unreservedly, with their talents, their limitations and their future.

Many of you here present have experienced this secret call of the Holy Spirit and have responded with complete generosity of heart. The love of Jesus “poured into your hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to you” (cf. *Rom* 5:5), has shown you the way of the consecrated life. It was not you who looked for it. It was Jesus who called you, inviting you to a more profound union with him. In the sacrament of Holy Baptism you renounced Satan and his works and received the necessary graces for a Christian life and for holiness. From that moment the grace of faith has blossomed within you and has enabled you to be united with God. At the moment of your religious profession or promises, faith led you to a total adherence to the mystery of the Heart of Jesus,

whose treasures you have discovered. You then renounced such good things as disposing freely of your life, having a family, acquiring possessions, so as to be free to give yourselves without reserve to Christ and to his Kingdom. Do you remember your enthusiasm when you began the pilgrimage of the consecrated life, trusting in the grace of God? Try not to lose this first fervour, and let Mary lead you to an ever fuller adherence. Dear men and women religious, dear consecrated persons! Whatever the mission entrusted to you, whatever cloistered or apostolic service you are engaged in, maintain in your hearts the primacy of your consecrated life. Let it renew your faith. The consecrated life, lived in faith, unites you closely to God, calls forth charisms and confers an extraordinary fruitfulness to your service.

Dear candidates to the priesthood! So much can be gained by reflecting on the way Mary learned from Jesus! From her very first "*fiat*", through the long, ordinary years of the hidden life, as she brought up Jesus, or when at Cana in Galilee she asked for the first sign, or when finally on Calvary, by the Cross, she looked on Jesus, she "learned" him moment by moment. Firstly in faith and then in her womb, she received the Body of Jesus and then gave birth to him. Day after day, enraptured, she adored him. She served him with solicitous love, singing the *Magnificat* in her heart. On your journey of preparation, and in your future priestly ministry, let Mary guide you as you "learn" Jesus. Keep your eyes fixed on him. Let him form you, so that in your ministry you will be able to show him to all who approach you. When you take into your hands the Eucharistic Body of Jesus so as to nourish his People, and when you assume responsibility for that part of the Mystical Body which will be entrusted to you, remember the attitude of wonder and adoration which characterized Mary's faith. As she in her solicitous, maternal love for Jesus, preserved her virginal love filled with wonder, so also you, as you genuflect at the moment of consecration, preserve in your soul the ability to wonder and to adore. Know how to recognize in the People of God entrusted to you the signs of Christ's presence. Be mindful and attentive to the signs of holiness which God will show you among the faithful. Do not fear future duties or the unknown! Do not fear that words will fail you or that you will encounter rejection! The world and the Church need priests, holy priests.

Dear representatives of the new Movements in the Church, the vitality of your communities is a sign of the Holy Spirit's active presence! It is from the faith of the Church and from the richness of the fruits of the Holy Spirit that your mission has been born. My prayer is that you will grow ever more numerous so as to serve the cause of the Kingdom of God in today's world. Believe in the grace of God which accompanies you and bring it into the living fabric of the Church, especially in places the priest or religious cannot reach. The movements you belong to are many. You are nourished by different schools of spirituality recognized by the Church. Draw upon the wisdom of the saints, have recourse to the heritage they have left us. Form your minds and your hearts on the works of the great masters and witnesses of the faith, knowing that the schools of spirituality must not be a treasure locked up in monastic libraries. The Gospel wisdom, contained in the writings of the great saints and attested to in their lives, must be brought in a mature way, not childishly or aggressively, to the world of culture and work, to the world of the media and politics,

to the world of family and social life. The authenticity of your faith and mission, which does not draw attention to itself but truly radiates faith and love, can be tested by measuring it against Mary's faith. Mirror yourselves in her heart. Remain in her school!

When the Apostles, filled with the Holy Spirit, went out to the whole world proclaiming the Gospel, one of them, John, the Apostle of love, took Mary into his home (cf. *Jn* 19:27). It was precisely because of his profound bond with Jesus and with Mary, that he could so effectively insist on the truth that "God is love" (*1 Jn* 4:8,16). These were the words that I placed at the beginning of the first Encyclical of my Pontificate: *Deus caritas est!* This is the most important, most central truth about God. To all for whom it is difficult to believe in God, I say again today: "God is love". Dear friends, be witnesses to this truth. You will surely be so if you place yourselves in the school of Mary. Beside her you will experience for yourselves that God is love, and you will transmit this message to the world with the richness and the variety that the Holy Spirit will know how to enkindle.

Praised be Jesus Christ.

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