



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
AT THE CLOSE OF THE MARIAN MONTH
IN THE VATICAN GARDENS***

*Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes in the Vatican Gardens
Wednesday, 31 May 2006*

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I have the joy of joining you at the end of this evocative Marian Prayer Meeting. In this way, in front of the Lourdes Grotto in the Vatican Gardens, we end the month of May in this year marked by the reception of the image of Our Lady of Fatima in St Peter's Square on the 25th anniversary of the attack on beloved John Paul II.

This year is also notable for the Apostolic Journey that the Lord granted me to make to Poland, where I was able to visit the places dear to my great Predecessor.

Concerning this Pilgrimage, of which I spoke this morning at the General Audience (see page 11), I now recall in particular my Visit to the Shrine of *Jasna Góra* in Czestochowa, where I understood even better how closely our heavenly Advocate accompanies the journey of her children, and that she does not leave unheard supplications addressed to her with humility and trust.

I would like to thank her once again, with you, for having accompanied me during my Visit to the beloved Land of Poland.

I would also like to express to Mary my gratitude for the support she offers me in my daily service to the Church. I know that I can count on her help in every situation; indeed, I know that she foresees with maternal intuition all her children's needs and intervenes effectively to sustain them: this has been the experience of the Christian people ever since its first steps in Jerusalem.

On today's Feast of the Visitation, as in every passage of the Gospel, we see Mary docile to the

divine plan and with an attitude of provident love for the brethren. In fact, the humble maiden from Nazareth, still amazed at what the Angel Gabriel had announced to her - that is, that she would be the mother of the promised Messiah -, learned that in her old age her elderly kinswoman Elizabeth had also conceived a son.

She immediately set out with haste for the house of her cousin, the Evangelist notes (cf. Lk 1: 39), to offer her help at a time of special need.

How can we fail to see that the hidden protagonist in the meeting between the young Mary and the by-then elderly Elizabeth is Jesus?

Mary bears him in her womb as in a sacred tabernacle and offers him as the greatest gift to Zechariah, to Elizabeth, his wife, and also to the infant developing in her womb. "Behold", the Mother of John the Baptist says, "when the voice of your greeting came to my ears, the babe in my womb leaped for joy" (Lk 1: 44).

Whoever opens his or her heart to the Mother encounters and welcomes the Son and is pervaded by his joy. True Marian devotion never obscures or diminishes faith and love for Jesus Christ Our Saviour, the one Mediator between God and humankind.

On the contrary, entrustment to Our Lady is a privileged path, tested by numerous saints, for a more faithful following of the Lord. Consequently, let us entrust ourselves to her with filial abandonment!

With these sentiments I cordially greet each one of you, Your Eminences, venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and in the Priesthood, and also you, dear men and women, dear lay faithful who have not wished to miss this annual appointment at the end of May.

I would especially like to commend to your prayers the Vigil that will be held in St Peter's Square this coming Saturday evening with the Movements and the new secular Communities. These are promising associations that have blossomed in the Church since the Second Vatican Council.

May the motherly intercession of the Queen of Saints obtain for all Christ's disciples the gift of an unwavering faith and an unswerving Gospel witness.

I impart my Blessing to you all and willingly extend it to your loved ones and especially to the sick, the elderly and all who are experiencing difficulty.

Copyright © Dicastero per la Comunicazione - Libreria Editrice Vaticana