



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI TO MEMBERS OF THE MEN'S MARIAN SODALITY OF REGENSBURG

*Hall of Popes
Saturday, 28 May 2011*

*Honourable President,
Dear Sodality Members,*

I bid you all a very cordial welcome on the occasion of your visit, your gift and your discovery of a forgotten event in my life. Indeed it is not simply an event of the “past”: my admission to the Marian Sodality looked to the future and was never merely something that happened. So even after 70 years this event belongs to “today” and points out the way to “tomorrow”. I am grateful to you for having “brought it out”, I am glad about this. I warmly thank you, dear President, for your kind words which come from your heart and reach out to hearts.

Those were dark times, during the war. One after the other Hitler had subjugated Poland, Denmark, the States of Benelux, France, and, in April 1941 — in that very same period, 70 years ago — he occupied both Yugoslavia and Greece. It seemed as though the continent lay in the hands of this power, which, at the same time, also cast doubts on Christianity’s future.

We were admitted to the Sodality but shortly afterwards the war against Russia broke out. The seminary was disbanded and the Sodality — even before it had met, before it had managed to meet — was already scattered to the four winds.

This is why it was not included as an “external event” of my life but rather lives on as “an internal event”, for it had always been clear that Catholicity cannot exist without a Marian approach, that being Catholic means being Marian and that this implies love for the Mother and that it is in the Mother and through the Mother that we find the Lord.

Here, through the Bishops' *ad limina* visits, I am constantly aware that people — especially in Latin America but also on the other continents — can entrust themselves to the Mother, can love the Mother and so, through the Mother, they can learn to know, to understand and to love Christ. I have experienced how in the world the Mother continues to bring forth the Lord, how Mary continues to say “yes” and to bring Christ into the world.

When we were studying after the war — and I believe that today not very much has changed, I do not think that the situation is much improved — the Mariology taught at German universities was somewhat austere and dull. However I believe that we found the essential in it. At that time we were oriented to Guardini and to the book of his friend, the parish priest Josef Weiger, *Maria, Mutter der Glaubenden*, (Mary, Mother of believers), who refers to Elizabeth's words: Blessed are you who believed (cf. Lk 1:45).

Mary is the great believer. She took up Abraham's role of being a believer and crystallized Abraham's faith in faith in Jesus Christ, thereby showing us all the way of faith, the courage to entrust ourselves to the God who puts himself in our hands, the joy of being his witnesses; and then his determination to stand firm when everyone else had fled, the courage to remain on the Lord's side when he seemed to be lost and thus to make our own the testimony that led to Easter.

I am therefore grateful to hear that the Sodality has about 40,000 members in Bavaria and that today there are still people who with Mary love the Lord and through Mary learn to know and love the Lord and, like her, bear witness to the Lord in difficult as well as in happy times; that they are with him, beneath the Cross and continue to live Easter joyfully together with him.

I therefore thank all of you for continuing to hold this testimony up high, because we know that there are Bavarian Catholic men who are supportive, who take this path marked out by the Jesuits in the 16th century and who on Saturday morning, 28 May, in the Vatican's Hall of Popes, continue to show that faith is not obsolete but always open to a “today” and above all to a “tomorrow”.

“*Vergelt's Gott für alles*” [May God reward you for everything] and may God bless you all! My heartfelt thanks.