



The Holy See

PASTORAL VISIT TO CAGLIARI

HOLY MASS AT THE SHRINE OF "OUR LADY OF BONARIA"

HOMILY OF HOLY FATHER FRANCIS

*Square in front of the Shrine of Our Lady of Bonaria, Cagliari
Sunday, 22 September 2013*

Photo Gallery

Sa paghe 'e Nostru Segnore siat sempre chin bois

Today the desire to visit the Shrine of Our Lady of Bonaria, that I had announced in St Peter's Square before the summer began, has come true.

1. I have come *to share* with you the joys and hopes, the struggles and responsibilities, the ideals and aspirations of your island, and *to strengthen you in the faith*. Here in Cagliari, as in all Sardinia, there is no lack of difficulties — there are so many — of problems and concerns. I am thinking especially of the lack of work and of job insecurity, and therefore of uncertainty about the future. Your beautiful region of Sardinia has long suffered from many situations of poverty, which have been worsened by its condition as an island. The faithful collaboration of everyone, along with the responsible commitment of institutions — including the Church — is necessary in order to guarantee that fundamental rights are accorded to persons and to families, and in order to foster a more stable and fraternal society. The right to work, the right to bring home bread, bread earned through work must be guaranteed! I am close to you! I am close to you, I remember you in prayer and I encourage you to persevere in bearing witness to the human and Christian values that are so deeply rooted in the faith and history of this land and of its people. May you always keep the light of hope burning!

2. I have come among you *to place myself, together with you, at the feet of Our Lady*, who gives us her Son. I am well aware that Mary, our Mother, is very much in your hearts, as this Shrine testifies, to which many generations of Sardinians have climbed — and will continue to climb! — in order to invoke the protection of Our Lady of Bonaria, Principle Patroness of the Island. Here you bring the joys and sufferings of this land, of your families, and even of those of its children who live far away, who have left with great pain and longing, in order to find work and a future for themselves and for those who are dear to them. Today, we who gather here want thank Mary, because she is always near to us. We want to renew our trust and our love for her.

The first Reading we heard shows us Mary in prayer, in the Upper Room, together with the Apostles. Mary prays, she prays together with the community of the disciples, and she teaches us to have complete trust in God and in his mercy. This is the power of prayer! Let us never tire of knocking at God's door. Everyday through Mary let us carry our entire life to God's heart! Knock at the door of God's heart!

In the Gospel, however, we take in Jesus' last gaze upon his Mother (cf. Jn 19:25-27). From the Cross, Jesus looks at his Mother and entrusts her to the Apostle John, saying: This is your son. We are all present in John, even us, and Jesus' look of love entrusts us to the maternal care of the Mother. Mary would have remembered another look of love, when she was a girl: the gaze of God the Father, who looked upon her humility, her littleness. Mary teaches us that God does not abandon us; he can do great things even with our weaknesses. Let us trust in him! Let us knock at the door of his heart!

3. The third thought: today *I have come among you; or rather, we have come together, to encounter the gaze of Mary*, since there, as it were, is reflected the gaze of the Father, who made her the Mother of God, and the gaze of the Son on the Cross, who made her our Mother. It is with that gaze that Mary watches us today. We need her tender gaze, her maternal gaze, which knows us better than anyone else, her gaze full of compassion and care. Mary, today we want to tell you: Mother grant us your gaze! Your gaze leads us to God, your gaze is a gift of the good Father who waits for us at every turn of our path, it is a gift of Jesus Christ on the Cross, who takes upon himself our sufferings, our struggles, our sin. And in order to meet this Father who is full of love, today we say to her: Mother, give us your gaze! Let's say it all together: "Mother, grant us your gaze!". "Mother, grant us your gaze!".

Along our path, which is often difficult, we are not alone. We are so many, we are a people, and the gaze of Our Lady helps us to look at one another as brothers and sisters. Let us look upon one another in a more fraternal way! Mary teaches us to have that gaze which strives to welcome, to accompany and to protect. Let us learn to look at one another beneath Mary's maternal gaze! There are people whom we instinctively consider less and who instead are in greater need: the most abandoned, the sick, those who have nothing to live on, those who do not know Jesus, youth who find themselves in difficulty, young people who cannot find work. Let us not be afraid to go out

and to look upon our brothers and sisters with Our Lady's gaze. She invites us to be true brothers and sisters. And let us never allow something or someone to come between us and Our Lady's gaze. Mother, grant us your gaze! May no one hide from it! May our childlike heart know how to defend itself from the many "windbags" who make false promises? from those who have a gaze greedy for an easy life and full of promises that cannot be fulfilled. May they not rob us of Mary's gaze, which is full of tenderness, which gives us strength and builds solidarity among us. Let us say together: Mother, grant us your gaze! Mother, grant us your gaze! Mother, grant us your gaze!

Nostra Signora 'e Bonaria bos acumpanzet sempre in sa vida.