



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE 24th INTERNATIONAL
MARIOLOGICAL MARIAN CONGRESS**

[8-11 September 2021]

Dear brothers and sisters,

I heartily participate in your joy of celebrating, albeit in a different way than usual, this 25th International Marian Congress, on the theme *Mary between theologies and cultures today. Models, communications, perspectives*. Our rejoicing should not forget the silent cry of so many brothers and sisters living in conditions of great difficulty, made worse by the pandemic. The true joy that comes from the Lord always gives space to the voices of the forgotten, so that together with them we can build a better future. Mary, in the beauty of following the Gospel and in her service to the common good of humanity and the planet, always teaches us to listen to these voices, and she herself becomes the voice of the voiceless in order “to give birth to a new world, where all of us are brothers and sisters, where there is room for all those whom our societies discard” (Encyclical Letter, *Fratelli tutti*, 278).

In its more than sixty years of activity, the *Pontificia Academia Mariana Internationalis* has coordinated and brought together Mariology scholars from around the world, especially through its International Mariological Marian Congresses. It has offered suggestions, insights, ideas and reflection in a changing era marked by rapid transformation in “our ways of living, of relating to one another, of communicating and thinking, of how different generations relate to one another and how we understand and experience faith” (Pope Francis, *Address to the Roman Curia*, 21 December 2019). Such Congresses “are a clear testament to the fact that Mariology is a necessary presence for dialogue among cultures and is capable of nourishing fraternity and peace” (*Message to the Pontifical Academies*, 4 December 2019).

Indeed, we are aware that “theology and Christian culture have lived up to their mission whenever they were ready to take risks and remain faithful on the borderline” (Apostolic Constitution *Veritatis Gaudium*, 5). And on these frontiers, the Mother of the Lord has her own special presence: she is

the Mother of all, regardless of ethnicity or nationality. Thus, the figure of Mary becomes a point of reference for a culture capable of overcoming the barriers that can create division. Therefore, on the path of this culture of fraternity, the Spirit calls us to welcome once again the sign of consolation and sure hope that has the name, the face and the heart of Mary: woman, disciple, mother and friend. It is along this path that the Spirit continues to tell us that “the times we are living in are the times of Mary” (*Address to the Pontifical Pontifical Theological Faculty “Marianum”, 24 October 2020*). The *Pontificia Academia Mariana Internationalis*, persevering in its commitment to renewal, endeavours to read the signs of these times, for the benefit of the Church and of every woman and man of good will.

The mystery enclosed in the person of Mary is the very mystery of the Word of God incarnate. Hence Pope Benedict’s exhortation: “I would encourage scholars ... to study the relationship between *Mariology and the theology of the Word*. ... We see how at home Mary is with the Word of God, with ease she moves in and out of it. She speaks and thinks with the Word of God; the Word of God becomes her word, and her word issues from the Word of God. Here we see how her thoughts are attuned to the thoughts of God, how her will is one with the will of God. Since Mary is completely imbued with the word of God, she is able to become the Mother of the Word Incarnate” (Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini*, 27-28).

Let us not forget that it is precisely this same Word that nurtures popular piety, which draws naturally from Our Lady, expressing and transmitting the “theological life present in the piety of Christian peoples, especially among their poor ... a theological life nourished by the working of the Holy Spirit ... the fruit of the inculturated Gospel” (Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 125-126).

I thank the *Pontificia Academia Mariana Internationalis* for preparing and organising this Congress, which is an important moment in the service of coordinating Marian theology entrusted to the Academy. Remembering that Saint Francis of Assisi surrounded the Virgin Mary “with immense love because she had made God our brother” (Bonaventura da Bagnoregio, *Leggenda maggiore*, IX, 3), I cordially send every one of you the Apostolic Blessing.

Rome, Saint John Lateran, 22 August 2021, Memorial of the B.V. Maria Regina

FRANCIS

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