



The Holy See

PILGRIMAGE TO THE MARIAN SHRINE OF MENTORELLA

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

29 October 1978

From the opening of the Second Vatican Council, I have had the opportunity of staying in Rome several times, both for the work of the Council and for other tasks entrusted to me by Pope Paul VI. On the occasion of these stays in Rome, I have often visited the sanctuary of Our Lady of Mentorella. This place, hidden among the mountains, has particularly fascinated me. From it, one's eyes can range over and admire the magnificent view of the Italian landscape. I came here again a few days before the last Conclave. And if today I have wished to return, it is for various reasons, which I will set forth now. First, however, I want to apologize to my collaborators, to the local administration and to those who arranged this flight, for having given them additional trouble with my arrival. At the same time I greet cordially all the inhabitants of neighbouring Guadagnolo, and all those who have gathered here from other localities nearby. I greet the custodians of this sanctuary, the Polish Fathers of the Resurrection and also the clergy of the surrounding districts with their bishop, Mons. Guglielmo Giaquinta. We read in the Gospel of St Luke that Mary, after the Annunciation, went to the hill country to visit her kinswoman Elizabeth. When she arrived at Ain-Karin, she put her whole soul into the words of the canticle which the Church recalls every day in Vespers: "Magnificat anima mea Dominum"—"My soul magnifies the Lord". I wanted to come here, among these mountains, to sing the "Magnificat" in Mary's footsteps. This is a place in which man opens to God in a special way. A place where, far from everything, but also at the same time close to nature, one can speak confidentially to God himself. One feels within one what is man's personal call. And man must glorify God the Creator and Redeemer; he must, in some way, become the voice of the whole of creation in order to say, in its name, "Magnificat". He must announce the "magnalia Dei", the great works of God, and, at the same time, express himself in this sublime relationship with God, because in the visible world only he can do so. During my stays in Rome, this place helped me a great deal to pray. And that is another reason why I wanted to come here today. Prayer, which expresses in various ways man's relationship with the living God, is also the first task and almost the first announcement of the Pope, just as it is the first condition of his service in the Church and in the world. During these few days that have passed since 16 October, I have had the fortune to hear, from the mouths of authoritative persons, words which confirm the spiritual awakening of modern man. These words—and that is significant—were spoken mainly by lay people who fill high offices in the political life of various nations and peoples. They spoke often of the needs of the human spirit, which are not inferior to those of the body. At the same time they indicated the Church, in the first place, as capable of satisfying these needs. Let what I say now be a first humble reply to everything I have heard: the Church prays, the Church wishes to pray, she wants to be

in the service of the most simple, and at the same time splendid, gift of the human spirit, which is realized in prayer. Prayer is, in fact, the first expression of man's interior truth, the first condition of true freedom of the spirit. The Church prays and wishes to pray in order to listen to the interior voice of the divine Spirit, so that he himself, in us and with us, may speak with the sighs, too deep for words, of the whole of creation. The Church prays, and wishes to pray, to meet the needs in the depths of man, who is sometimes so restricted and limited by the conditions and circumstances of everyday life, by everything that is temporary, by weakness, sin, discouragement and by a life that seems meaningless. Prayer gives a meaning to the whole of life, at every moment, in every circumstance. Therefore the Pope, as the Vicar of Christ on earth, wishes in the first place to unite with all those who strain towards union with Christ in prayer, wherever they may be: as a Bedouin in the steppe, or the Carmelites or Cistercians in deep enclosure, or the sick on a hospital bed in the sufferings of the death agony, or a person in activity, in the fullness of life, or oppressed and humiliated individuals ... everywhere. The Mother of Christ went to the hills to say her "Magnificat". May the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit accept the Pope's prayer in this sanctuary and grant the gifts of the Spirit to all those who pray. © Copyright 1978 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana