



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER AT LOURDES GROTTO IN THE VATICAN GARDENS TO CONCLUDE THE MARIAN MONTH

May 31, 2001

"Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country..." (Lk 1,39).

In front of this Grotto, which recalls the Shrine of Lourdes, we conclude the Marian journey made during the month of May. Let us relive together the mystery of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin, on this pilgrimage through the Vatican Gardens which every year involves Cardinals and Bishops, priests, men and women religious, seminarians and many of the faithful. I am grateful to Cardinal Virgilio Noè and all those who have carefully prepared this pause for prayer at the feet of Our Lady.

The words of the Evangelist Luke echo in our hearts, *"When Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary ... [she] was filled with the Holy Spirit"* (1,41)

The meeting between Our Lady and her cousin, Elizabeth, is like a sort of "small Pentecost". This is what I would like to stress this evening, on the eve of the great solemnity of the Holy Spirit. In the Gospel account, the Visitation immediately follows the Annunciation: the Virgin, who carries the Son conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit in her womb, radiates grace and spiritual joy around her. It is the presence of the Spirit within her that causes Elizabeth's son, John, destined to prepare the way for the Son of God made man, to leap with joy.

Wherever Mary is, Christ is; and wherever Christ is, there is his Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and from him in the most sacred mystery of the Trinitarian life. The Acts of the Apostles rightly places emphasis on Mary's prayerful presence in the Upper Room, together with the Apostles gathered in expectation to receive the "power from on high". The "yes" of the Virgin, "fiat", draws down the Gift of God upon humanity: as in the Annunciation, so in Pentecost. So it continues to happen throughout the Church's journey.

Gathered in prayer with Mary, let us implore an abundant outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the whole Church, so that she may put out into the deep in the new millennium with her sails unfurled. In a special way, let us call down the Spirit upon all who work everyday at the service of the Holy See, so that the work of each one may always be enlivened by a spirit of faith and apostolic enthusiasm.

It is very significant that the last day of May brings us the feast of the Visitation. With this conclusion, it is as if we wanted to say that every day of this month has been a sort of visitation for us. We have lived a continuous visitation during the month of May, just like Mary and Elizabeth. We are grateful to God that this biblical event is presented to us once again by today's liturgy. I hope for you all, who have gathered here in such a numerous group, that the grace of the Marian visitation you have experienced during the month of May and especially on this last evening, will be extended in the days to come.