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# August 2007

Pope Benedict XVI

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## *August 2007*



### **On Wealth – Angelus Address on August 5, 2007 at Castel Gandolfo.**

... May the Virgin Mary, whom we remember today in particular while we celebrate the liturgical Memorial of the Basilica of St Mary Major, obtain ... grace for us. As is well known, this is the first Western Basilica to have been built in honor of Mary; it was rebuilt in 432 by Pope Sixtus III to celebrate the divine motherhood of the Virgin, a Dogma that had been solemnly proclaimed the previous year at the Ecumenical Council of Ephesus.

May the Virgin, who was more closely involved in Christ's mystery than any other creature, sustain us on our pilgrimage of faith so that, as the liturgy invites us to pray today, "we do not let ourselves be dominated by greed or selfishness as we toil with our efforts to subdue the earth but seek always what is worthwhile in God's eyes" (cf. Entrance Antiphon).

### **On the Peace Christ Brought – Angelus Address on August 19, 2007 at Castel Gandolfo.**

... The Virgin Mary, Queen of Peace, shared the struggle of her son Jesus against the evil one, to the point of spiritual martyrdom, and she continues to share this struggle until the end of time. Let us invoke her maternal intercession that she may help us always to be faithful witnesses to Christ's peace, never giving in to compromises with evil.

## **On St. Gregory Nazianzen, a fourth-century bishop – general Audience on August 22, 2007 in Paul VI Hall.**

... Mary, who gave human nature to Christ, is truly the Mother of God ("Theotókos": cf. Epistle 101, 16: SC 208,42), and with a view to her lofty mission was "prepurified" (Oratio 38,13: SC 358,132, presenting a type of distant prelude to the dogma of the Immaculate Conception). He (Gregory) proposes Mary as a model for Christians, above all for virgins, and as an aid that should be invoked in need (cf. Oratio 24, 11: SC 282,60-64). ...

Inclined to study and prayer, he nonetheless took part in the many controversies which followed the Council of Nicaea. Gregory forcefully defended the Church's faith in one God in three equal and distinct persons. He upheld the full humanity of the Incarnate Son, arguing that Christ took on our human nature in its integrity, including a rational soul, in order to bring us the fullness of redemption. He likewise defended Mary's dignity as the Mother of God, her purity and her intercessory power.

## **Benedict XVI's Homily on the Assumption – "Take Heart, It Is Love That Wins in the End!" Castel Gandolfo, Italy, Aug. 15, 2007 at St. Thomas of Villanova Parish in Castel Gandolfo.**

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

In his great work "De Civitate Dei," St Augustine says once that the whole of human history, the history of the world, is a struggle between two loves: love of God to the point of losing oneself, of total self-giving, and love of oneself to the point of despising God, of hating others. This same interpretation of history as a struggle between two loves, between love and selfishness, also appears in the reading from the Book of Revelation that we have just heard.

Here, these two loves appear in two great figures. First of all, there is the immensely strong, red dragon with a striking and disturbing manifestation of power without grace, without love, of absolute selfishness, terror and violence.

At the time when St John wrote the Book of Revelation, this dragon represented for him the power of the anti-Christian Roman emperors, from Nero to Domitian. This power seemed boundless; the military, political and propagandist power of the Roman Empire was such that before it, faith, the Church, appeared as a defenseless woman with no chance of survival and even less of victory.

Who could stand up to this omnipresent force that seemed capable of achieving everything? Yet, we know that in the end it was the defenseless woman who won and not egoism or hatred; the love of God triumphed and the Roman Empire was opened to the Christian faith.

The words of Sacred Scripture always transcend the period in history. Thus, not only does this dragon suggest the anti-Christian power of the persecutors of the Church of that time, but also anti-Christian dictatorships of all periods.

We see this power, the force of the red dragon, brought into existence once again in the great dictatorships of the last century: the Nazi dictatorship and the dictatorship of Stalin monopolized all the power, penetrated every corner, the very last corner. It seemed impossible in the long term that faith could survive in the face of this dragon that was so powerful, that could not wait to devour God become a Child, as well as the woman, the Church. But also in this case, in the end love was stronger than

hate.

Today too, the dragon exists in new and different ways. It exists in the form of materialistic ideologies that tell us it is absurd to think of God; it is absurd to observe God's commandments: they are a leftover from a time past. Life is only worth living for its own sake. Take everything we can get in this brief moment of life. Consumerism, selfishness and entertainment alone are worthwhile. This is life. This is how we must live. And once again, it seems absurd, impossible, to oppose this dominant mindset with all its media and propagandist power. Today too, it seems impossible to imagine a God who created man and made himself a Child and who was to be the true ruler of the world.

Even now, this dragon appears invincible, but it is still true today that God is stronger than the dragon, that it is love which conquers rather than selfishness.

Having thus considered the various historical forms of the dragon, let us now look at the other image: the woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, surrounded by twelve stars. This is also a multidimensional image.

Without any doubt, a first meaning is that it is Our Lady, Mary, clothed with the sun, that is, with God, totally; Mary who lives totally in God, surrounded and penetrated by God's light. Surrounded by the twelve stars, that is, by the twelve tribes of Israel, by the whole People of God, by the whole Communion of Saints; and at her feet, the moon, the image of death and mortality.

Mary has left death behind her; she is totally clothed in life, she is taken up body and soul into God's glory and thus, placed in glory after overcoming death, she says to us: Take heart, it is love that wins in the end! The message of my life was: I am the handmaid of God, my life has been a gift of myself to God and my neighbor. And this life of service now arrives in real life. May you too have trust and have the courage to live like this, countering all the threats of the dragon.

This is the first meaning of the woman whom Mary succeeded in being. The "woman clothed with the sun" is the great sign of the victory of love, of the victory of goodness, of the victory of God; a great sign of consolation.

Yet, this woman who suffered, who had to flee, who gave birth with cries of anguish, is also the Church, the pilgrim Church of all times. In all generations she has to give birth to Christ anew, to bring him very painfully into the world, with great suffering. Persecuted in all ages, it is almost as if, pursued by the dragon, she had gone to live in the wilderness.

However, in all ages, the Church, the People of God, also lives by the light of God and as the Gospel says is nourished by God, nourishing herself with the Bread of the Holy Eucharist. Thus, in all the trials in the various situations of the Church through the ages in different parts of the world, she wins through suffering. And she is the presence, the guarantee of God's love against all the ideologies of hatred and selfishness.

We see of course that, today too, the dragon wants to devour God who made himself a Child. Do not fear for this seemingly frail God; the fight has already been won. Today too, this weak God is strong: he is true strength.

Thus, the Feast of the Assumption is an invitation to trust in God and also to imitate Mary in what she herself said: Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; I put myself at the Lord's disposal.

This is the lesson: one should travel on one's own road; one should give life and not take it. And precisely in this way each one is on the journey of love which is the loss of self, but this losing of oneself is in fact the only way to truly find oneself, to find true life.

Let us look to Mary, taken up into Heaven. Let us be encouraged to celebrate the joyful feast with faith: God wins. Faith, which seems weak, is the true force of the world. Love is stronger than hate.

And let us say with Elizabeth: Blessed are you among women. Let us pray to you with all the Church: Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

**On Mary's Glorification – "She Sits in Splendor at the Right Hand of Her Son. Angelus address delivered on August 15, 2007 at Castel Gandolfo.**

SOLEMNITY OF THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN

MARY BENEDICT XVI

ANGELUS

Papal Summer Residence, Castel Gandolfo

Wednesday, 15 August 2007

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today, we are celebrating the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. This is an ancient feast deeply rooted in Sacred Scripture: indeed, it presents the Virgin Mary closely united to her divine Son and ever supportive of him.

Mother and Son appear closely bound in the fight against the infernal enemy until they completely defeat him. This victory is expressed in particular in overcoming sin and death, that is, in triumphing over the enemies which St Paul always presents as connected (cf. Rom 5: 12, 15-21; I Cor 15: 21-26).

Therefore, just as Christ's glorious Resurrection was the definitive sign of this victory, so Mary's glorification in her virginal body is the ultimate confirmation of her total solidarity with the Son, both in the conflict and in victory.

The Servant of God Pope Pius XII interpreted the deep theological meaning of this mystery on November 1, 1950 when he pronounced the solemn Dogmatic Definition of this Marian privilege.

He declared: "Hence, the revered Mother of God, from all eternity joined in a hidden way with Jesus Christ in one and the same decree of predestination, immaculate in her conception, a most perfect virgin in her divine motherhood, the noble associate of the divine Redeemer who has won a complete triumph over sin and its consequences, finally obtained, as the supreme culmination of her privileges, that she should be preserved free from the corruption of the tomb and that, like her own Son, having overcome death, she might be taken up body and soul to the glory of Heaven where, as Queen, she sits in splendor at the right hand of her Son, the immortal King of the Ages" (Apostolic Constitution "Munificentissimus Deus": AAS 42, [November 1, 1950]).

Dear brothers and sisters, after being taken up into Heaven, Mary did not distance herself from us but continues to be even closer to us, and her light shines on our lives and on the history of all humanity. Attracted by the heavenly brightness of the Mother of the Redeemer, let us turn with trust to the One who looks upon us and protects us from on high.

We all need her help and comfort to face the trials and challenges of daily life; we need to feel that she is our mother and sister in the concrete situations of our lives.

And so that we too may one day be able to share in her same destiny, let us imitate her now in her meek following of Christ and her generous service to the brethren. This is the only way to have a foretaste, already on our earthly pilgrimage, of the joy and peace which those who reach the immortal destination of Paradise live to the full.

After the *Angelus*:

I offer a warm welcome to the English-speaking visitors gathered for this Angelus prayer on the Solemnity of the Assumption of Our Lady. May the example and prayers of Mary, Queen of Heaven, inspire and sustain us on our pilgrimage of faith, that we too may attain the glory of the Resurrection and the fulfillment of our hope in her Son's promises. Upon you and your families I invoke the Lord's richest blessings.

I wish you all a good Feast of the Assumption!

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