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Pope Benedict XVI

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The Marian Thoughts of Pope Benedict XVI

March 2009



On the Role of Angels – Angelus Address, March 1, 2009

On the threshold of the New Testament, Gabriel is sent to announce to Zachariah and Mary the joyous happenings that are the beginnings of our salvation; and an angel, whose name is not mentioned, warns Joseph, directing him in that moment of uncertainty. A chorus of angels reports the glad tidings of Jesus' birth to the shepherds, as the glad tidings of his resurrection will also be announced by angels to the women. At the end of time the angels will accompany Jesus in his glorious return (cf. Matthew 25:31).

Let us ask them (angels), especially today, to watch over me and my co-workers in the Roman Curia as we begin our retreat this week, as we do every year. Mary, Queen of Angels, pray for us!

Addressing a group of Italian-speaking workers from the Fiat factory, he said, "I want to express my encouragement to authorities, both political and civil, and also to businessmen, so that with the participation of everyone this delicate moment can be faced."

Referring to other regions with "equal difficulties," the Holy Father said, "I unite myself to the bishops and the respective local Churches to express my closeness to the affected families, and I entrust them in prayer to the protection of Most Holy Mary, and St. Joseph, patron of workers."

Message on Unity With Orthodox sent to a ceremony Sunday in which the president of Italy turned over the keys to a Russian Orthodox church in southern Italy to the president of Russia – March 1, 2009.

With these sentiments, invoking the intercession of the Mother of God and of St. Nicholas, the Pope renews his greetings to those present and sends them his blessing through my own.

Message for Youth Day '09 to be celebrated at the diocesan level on Palm Sunday – signed on February 22, 2009 and released on March 4, 2009.

Mary, Mother of hope

May Saint Paul be your example on this path of apostolic life. He nourished his life of constant faith and hope by looking to Abraham, of whom he wrote in the Letter to the Romans: "Hoping against hope, he believed that he would become the father of many nations." (Rom 4:18) Following in the footsteps of the people of hope - composed of prophets and saints of every age - we continue to advance towards the fulfillment of the Kingdom, and on this spiritual path we are accompanied by the Virgin Mary, Mother of Hope. She who incarnated the hope of Israel, who gave the world its Savior, and who remained at the foot of the Cross with steadfast hope, is our model and our support. Most of all, Mary intercedes for us and leads us through the darkness of our trials to the radiant dawn of an encounter with the Risen Christ. I would like to conclude this message, my dear young friends, with a beautiful and well-known prayer by Saint Bernard that was inspired by one of Mary's titles, Stella Maris, Star of the Sea: "You who amid the constant upheavals of this life find yourself more often tossed about by storms than standing on firm ground, do not turn your eyes from the brightness of this Star, if you would not be overwhelmed by boisterous waves. If the winds of temptations rise, if you fall among the rocks of tribulations, look up at the Star, call on Mary ... In dangers, in distress, in perplexities, think on Mary, call on Mary ...

Following her, you will never go astray; when you implore her aid, you will never yield to despair; thinking on her, you will not err; under her patronage you will never wander; beneath her protection you will not fear; she being your guide, you will not weary; with her assistance, you will arrive safely in the port." (Homilies in Praise of the Virgin Mother, 2:17)

Mary, Star of the Sea, we ask you to guide the young people of the whole world to an encounter with your Divine Son Jesus. Be the celestial guardian of their fidelity to the Gospel and of their hope.

Message to Archbishop Francisco Pérez González of Pamplona, Spain, March 6, 2009

Invoking the intercession of the Virgin, he said that, "with her maternal tenderness, she will prepare the hearts of all the participants to receive the grace of God with joy."

On Prayer and Christ's Transfiguration – Angelus Address, March 8, 2009

Let the Virgin Mary, teacher and model of prayer, be your guide in this more intense listening to God. Even in the deepest darkness of Christ's passion she did not lose but safeguarded the light of the Divine Son in her soul. For this reason let us call upon Mary with confidence and hope!

Address on Capitoline Hill – March 9, 2009

Dear friends, when you return to your homes, your communities and your parishes, tell everyone you meet that the Pope assures them all of his understanding, his spiritual closeness and his prayers. Please bring each one, especially the sick, the suffering and those in the most difficult situations my remembrance and God's Blessing, which I now impart to you through the intercession of Sts Peter and Paul, St Frances of Rome, Co-Patron of Rome. And especially of Mary Salus populi romani.

"Mary's Heart Is the Cloister Where the Word Continues to Speak in Silence" - Address to Benedictine Oblate Sisters of St. Frances of Rome at Tor de' Specchi, March 9, 2009

In our day too, Rome needs women and of course also men but here I wish to emphasize the feminine dimension of women, as I was saying, who belong wholly to God and wholly to their neighbour; women who are capable of recollection and of generous and discreet service; women who know how to obey their Pastors but also how to support them and encourage them with their suggestions, developed in conversation with Christ and in first-hand experience in the area of charity, assistance to the sick, to the marginalized, to minors in difficulty. This is the gift of a motherhood that is one with religious self-gift, after the model of Mary Most Holy. Let us think of the mystery of the Visitation. Immediately after

conceiving the Word of God in her heart and in her flesh, Mary set out to go and help her elderly kinswoman Elizabeth. Mary's heart is the cloister where the Word continues to speak in silence, and at the same time it is the crucible of a charity that is conducive to courageous gestures, as well as to a persevering and hidden sharing.

Letter on Society of St. Pius X – March 10, 2009

The day I spoke about this [Galatians 5:13-15] at the Major Seminary, the feast of Our Lady of Trust was being celebrated in Rome. And so it is: Mary teaches us trust. She leads us to her Son, in whom all of us can put our trust. He will be our guide -- even in turbulent times.

Trip to Cameroon and Angola – Angelus Address, March 15, 2009

On March 19, during the pastoral visit to Africa, we will celebrate the Solemnity of St. Joseph, patron of the universal Church, and my personal patron. St. Joseph, warned in a dream by an angel, had to flee with Mary to Egypt, in Africa, to take the newly born Jesus to a safe place, far from King Herod who wanted to kill him. The Scriptures were thus fulfilled: Jesus followed in the footsteps of the patriarchs of old and, like the people of Israel, reentered the Promised Land after having been in exile in Egypt. To the heavenly intercession of this great saint I entrust this upcoming pilgrimage and the peoples of all of Africa, with the challenges that face them and the hopes that animate them. I think especially of the victims of hunger, disease, injustices, of the fratricidal conflicts and of every form of violence that, unfortunately, continues to strike adults and children, without sparing missionaries, priests, religious, and volunteers. Brothers and sisters, accompany me on this trip with your prayers, invoking Mary, Mother and Queen of Africa.

Meeting With Cameroon Bishops at Christ the King Church in Yaoundé – March 18, 2009

Dear Cardinal, dear brother Bishops, at the conclusion of our meeting, I would like to say once more what a joy it is to be here in your country and to meet the people of Cameroon. I thank you for your warm welcome, a sign of the generosity of African hospitality. May the Virgin Mary, Our Lady of Africa, watch over all your diocesan communities. I entrust to her the entire people of Cameroon, and with all my heart I impart to you an affectionate Apostolic Blessing, which I also extend to the priests, men and women religious, to the catechists and to all the faithful of your dioceses.

Reflection on St. Joseph at Vesper Service at the Basilica of Mary Queen of the Apostles – March 18, 2009

Dear brothers in the priesthood, your pastoral ministry demands many sacrifices, yet it is also a source of great joy. Trusting in your Bishops, united fraternally to the whole presbyterate and supported by the portion of the People of God commended to your care, you will be able to respond faithfully to the Lord who has called you, just as he called Joseph to watch over Mary and the Child Jesus!

Dear brothers and sisters who live out your commitment in the consecrated life or in ecclesial movements, I also encourage you to look to Saint Joseph. When Mary received the visit of the angel at the Annunciation, she was already betrothed to Joseph. In addressing Mary personally, the Lord already closely associates Joseph to the mystery of the Incarnation. Joseph agreed to be part of the great events which God was beginning to bring about in the womb of his spouse. He took Mary into his home. He welcomed the mystery that was in Mary and the mystery that was Mary herself. He loved her with great respect, which is the mark of all authentic love. Joseph teaches us that it is possible to love without possessing. In contemplating Joseph, all men and women can, by God's grace, come to experience healing from their emotional wounds, if only they embrace the plan that God has begun to bring about in those close to him, just as Joseph entered into the work of redemption through Mary and as a result of what God had already done in her. Dear brothers and sisters from the ecclesial movements, may you be attentive to those around you, and may you reveal the loving face of God to the poor, especially by your works of mercy, your human and Christian education of young people, your programs for the advancement of women, and in so many other ways!

In conclusion, let us now turn to the spouse of Saint Joseph, the Virgin Mary, "Queen of Apostles", for under this title she is invoked as Patroness of Cameroon. To her I commend the consecration which each of you has received, as well as your desire to respond ever more faithfully to your calling and to the mission entrusted to you. Finally, I invoke her intercession for your beautiful country. Amen.

Benedict XVI's Homily at Amadou Ahidjo Stadium which marked the publication of the instrumentum laboris of the Second Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops – March 19, 2009

Jesus Christ brings us together on this day when the Church, here in Cameroon and throughout the world, celebrates the Feast of Saint Joseph, Husband of the Virgin Mary. I begin by wishing a very happy feast day to all those who, like myself, have received the grace of bearing this beautiful name, and I ask Saint Joseph to grant them his special protection in guiding them towards the Lord Jesus Christ all the days of their life.

The angel said to Joseph: "Do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home," (Mt 1:20) and that is precisely what he did: "he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him." (Mt 1:24) Why was Saint Matthew so keen to note Joseph's trust in the words received from the messenger of God, if not to invite us to imitate this same loving trust? ... Joseph trusts God when he hears his messenger, the Angel, say to him: "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her." (Mt 1:20) Throughout all of history, Joseph is the man who gives God the greatest display of trust, even in the face of such astonishing news. ... If discouragement overwhelms you, think of the faith of Joseph; if anxiety has its grip on you, think of the hope of Joseph, that descendant of Abraham who hoped against hope; if exasperation or hatred seizes you, think of the love of Joseph, who was the first man to set eyes on the human face of God in the person of the Infant conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary. Let us praise and thank Christ for having drawn so close to us, and for giving us Joseph as an example and model of love for him. Dear brothers and sisters, I want to say to you once more from the bottom of my heart: like Joseph, do not be afraid to take Mary into your home, that is to say do not be afraid to love the Church. Mary, Mother of the Church, will teach you to follow your pastors, to love your bishops, your priests, your deacons and your catechists; to heed what they teach you and to pray for their intentions. Husbands, look upon the love of Joseph for Mary and Jesus; those preparing for marriage, treat your future spouse as Joseph did; those of you who have given yourselves to God in celibacy, reflect upon the teaching of the Church, our Mother: "Virginity or celibacy for the sake of the Kingdom of God not only does not contradict the dignity of marriage but presupposes and confirms it. Marriage and virginity are two ways of expressing and living the one mystery of the Covenant of God with his people." (Redemptoris Custos, 20) Once more, I wish to extend a particular word of encouragement to fathers so that they may take Saint Joseph as their model. He who kept watch over the Son of Man is able to teach them the deepest meaning of their own fatherhood. In the same way, each father receives his children from God, and they are created in God's own image and likeness. Saint Joseph was the spouse of Mary. In the same way, each father sees himself entrusted with the mystery of womanhood through his own wife. Dear fathers, like Saint Joseph, respect and love your spouse; and by your love and your wise presence, lead your children to God where they must be (cf. Lk 2:49).

Papal Address to Special Council of the Synod for Africa at the apostolic nunciature of Yaoundé – March 19, 2009

Together, my brothers, let us pray: "Holy Mary, Mother of God, Protectress of Africa, you have given the world its true light, Jesus Christ. By your obedience to the Father and by the grace of the Holy Spirit, you have given us the source of our reconciliation and our joy.

"Mother of tenderness and wisdom, show us Jesus, your Son and the Son of God, sustain our journey of conversion, so that Jesus may enlighten us with his glory in all the settings of our personal, family and social life.

"Mother full of mercy and justice, by your docility to the Spirit, the Comforter, obtain for us the grace to be witnesses of the Risen Lord, so that we may become ever more fully the salt of the earth and the light of the world.

"Mother of Perpetual Succour, to your maternal intercession we entrust the preparation and the fruits of the Second Synod for Africa. Queen of Peace, pray for us! Our Lady of Africa, pray for us! "

Pontiff's Words at Cardinal Paul-Émile Léger Centre upon meeting with sick people- March 19, 2009

Before a brother or sister plunged into the mystery of the Cross, a respectful and compassionate silence, a prayerful presence, a gesture of tenderness and comfort, a kind look, a smile, often achieve more than many words. This was the experience of a small group of men and women, including the Virgin Mary and the Apostle John, who followed Jesus in the depths of his suffering at the time of his Passion and his death on the Cross. ... The saints have given us a fine example by living lives entirely dedicated to God, our Father. Saint Teresa of Avila, who placed her monastery under the protection of Saint Joseph, was healed from a particular ailment on the very day of his feast. She said she had never prayed to him in vain, and she recommended him to all who claimed not to know how to pray: "I do not understand", she wrote, "how anyone can think of the Queen of angels and of all the trials she suffered during the early years of the divine child Jesus, without thanking Saint Joseph for the perfect devotion with which he came to assist them both. ... I entrust all of you to the intercession of the Virgin Mary, our Mother, and to the intercession of Saint Joseph.

Pontiff's Address to Bishops of Angola and São Tomé at the apostolic nunciature in Luanda on March 20, 2009

Dear brothers, I entrust myself to your prayerful remembrance before the Lord, while for my part I assure you of a particular prayer to the one who is truly the Spouse of the Church, which he loves, protects and nourishes: the only-begotten Son of the living God, Jesus Christ our Lord. May he sustain your pastoral commitments by his grace, so that they will prove fruitful in accordance with the example and under the protection of the Immaculate Heart of the Virgin Mary. With these sentiments I impart my Apostolic Blessing to each of you, to your priests, and to the consecrated persons, seminarians, catechists and all the lay faithful who are members of the flock which God has entrusted to you.

Papal Message to Conference on Women with the theme "Life, Family, Development: The Role of Women in the Promotion of Human Rights," which took place on March 20/21, 2009 in the Vatican.

I once more extend best wishes for the success of this conference and my prayers for the continuing mission of the participating organizations. Invoking the intercession of Mary, "the symbol and the most perfect realization of the Church," (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 570) I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing.

On the Close of the Papal Visit to Africa Angelus Address at Cimangola field, on the outskirts of Luanda after holy Mass with bishops of the IMBISA (Interregional Meeting of Bishops of Southern Africa) – March 22, 2009

Dear brothers and sisters, At the conclusion of our Eucharistic celebration, as my pastoral visit to Africa comes to its close, let us now turn to Mary, the Mother of the Redeemer, to implore her loving intercession upon us, our families, and our world.

In this Angelus prayer, we recall Mary's complete "yes" to the will of God. Through Mary's obedience of faith, the Son of God came into the world to bring us forgiveness, salvation and life in abundance.

May Mary, Queen of Peace, continue to guide Angola's people in the task of national reconciliation following the devastating and inhuman experience of the civil war. May her prayers obtain for all Angolans the grace of authentic forgiveness, respect for others, and cooperation which alone can carry forward the immense work of rebuilding. May the Holy Mother of God, who points us to her Son, our brother, remind Christians everywhere of our duty to love our neighbor, to be peacemakers, to be the first to forgive those who have sinned against us, even as we have been forgiven.

Here in Southern Africa, let us ask our Lady in a particular way to intercede for peace, the conversion of hearts, and an end to the conflict in the neighboring Great Lakes region. May her Son, the Prince of Peace, bring healing to the suffering, consolation to those who mourn, and strength to all who carry

forward the difficult process of dialogue, negotiation and the cessation of violence. With this confidence, then, we now turn to Mary, our Mother, and, in reciting this Angelus prayer, let us pray for the peace and salvation of the whole human family.

On the Challenges Facing Africa – Angelus Address on March 29, 2009

Let us give thanks to God and pray to Mary Most Holy that Christ's message of hope and love be spread through whole world.

Pontiff's Message for the forty-sixth World Day of Prayer for Vocations to be observed May 3 and released on March 31, 2009

An emblematic human response, full of trust in God's initiative, is the generous and unmitigated "Amen" of the Virgin of Nazareth, uttered with humble and decisive adherence to the plan of the Most High announced to her by God's messenger (cf. Lk 1:38). Her prompt "Yes" allowed Her to become the Mother of God, the Mother of our Saviour. Mary, after this first "fiat," had to repeat it many times, even up to the culminating moment of the crucifixion of Jesus, when "standing by the cross of Jesus" as the Evangelist John notes, she participated in the dreadful suffering of her innocent Son. And it was from the cross, that Jesus, while dying, gave her to us as Mother and entrusted us to her as sons and daughters (cf. Jn 19:26-27); she is especially the Mother of priests and consecrated persons. I want to entrust to her all those who are aware of God's call to set out on the road of the ministerial priesthood or consecrated life.

Dear friends, do not become discouraged in the face of difficulties and doubts; trust in God and follow Jesus faithfully and you will be witnesses of the joy that flows from intimate union with him. Imitating the Virgin Mary whom all generations proclaim as blessed because she believed (cf. Lk 1:48), commit yourselves with every spiritual energy, to realize the heavenly Father's plan of salvation, cultivating in your heart, like her, the ability to be astonished and to adore him who is mighty and does "great things," for Holy is his name (cf. Lk 1:49).