



The Holy See

TRIBUTE OF THE HOLY FATHER
TO THE STATUE OF MARY IMMACULATE CONCEPTION
PRAYER OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

Spanish Steps, Rome
Friday, 8 December 2006

O Mary, Immaculate Virgin,

Again this year, with filial love, we meet at the foot of your image to renew to you the homage of the Christian community and of the city of Rome. Let us pause in prayer here, following the tradition inaugurated by previous Popes, on the solemn day in which the liturgy celebrates your Immaculate Conception, a mystery that is a source of joy and hope for all the redeemed.

We greet you and call upon you with the Angel's words: "full of grace" (Lk 1: 28), the most beautiful name that God himself has called you from eternity.

"Full of grace" are you, Mary, full of divine love from the very first moment of your existence, providentially predestined to be Mother of the Redeemer and intimately connected to him in the mystery of salvation.

In your Immaculate Conception shines forth the vocation of Christ's disciples, called to become, with his grace, saints and immaculate through love (cf. Eph 1: 4). In you shines the dignity of every human being who is always precious in the Creator's eyes.

Those who look to you, All Holy Mother, never lose their serenity, no matter what the hardships of life.

Although the experience of sin is a sad one since it disfigures the dignity of God's children, anyone who turns to you discovers the beauty of truth and love and finds the path that leads to the

Father's house.

"*Full of grace*", are you, Mary, which, welcoming with your "yes" to the Creator's plan, opened to us the path of salvation. Teach us also at your school to say our "yes" to the Lord's will. Let it be a "yes" that joins with your own "yes", without reservations or shadows, a "yes" that the Heavenly Father willed to have need of in order to beget the new Man, Christ, the one Saviour of the world and of history.

Give us the courage to say "no" to the deceptions of power, money, pleasure; to dishonest earnings, corruption and hypocrisy, to selfishness and violence; "no" to the Evil One, the deceitful prince of this world; to say "yes" to Christ, who destroys the power of evil with the omnipotence of love. We know that only hearts converted to Love, which is God, can build a better future for all.

"*Full of grace*", are you, Mary! For all generations your name is a pledge of sure hope. Yes! Because as the great poet, Dante, wrote, for us mortals you are "a source of living hope" (*Paradise*, XXXIII, 12). Let us come once again as trusting pilgrims to draw faith and comfort, joy and love, safety and peace from this source, the wellspring of your Immaculate Heart.

Virgin "full of grace", show yourself to be a tender and caring Mother to those who live in this city of yours, so that the true Gospel spirit may enliven and guide their conduct; show yourself as Mother and watchful keeper of Italy and Europe, so that people may draw from their ancient Christian roots fresh vigour to build their present and their future; show yourself as a provident and merciful Mother to the whole world so that, by respecting human dignity and rejecting every form of violence and exploitation, sound foundations may be laid for the civilization of love.

Show yourself as Mother, especially to those most in need: the defenceless, the marginalized and outcasts, to the victims of a society that all too often sacrifices the human person for other ends and interests.

Show yourself, O Mary, as Mother of all, and give us Christ, the Hope of the world! "*Monstra Te esse Matrem*", O Virgin Immaculate, full of grace! Amen!