



The Holy See

VISIT TO THE SHRINE OF OUR LADY OF DIVINE LOVE

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE RECITATION OF
THE HOLY ROSARY***

Monday, 1 May 2006

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

It is a comfort to be with you today to recite the Holy Rosary at this Shrine of Our Lady of Divine Love, where the faithful express the devout affection for the Virgin Mary that is rooted in the soul and history of the Roman people.

Special joy springs from the thought of thus renewing the experience of my beloved Predecessor John Paul II, who, on the first day of the month of May in 1979, exactly 27 years ago, made his first Visit to this Shrine as Pontiff.

I greet with affection the Rector, Mons. Pasquale Silla, and thank him for his cordial address. With him, I greet the other Priests Oblates Sons of Our Lady of Divine Love and the Sisters Daughters of Our Lady of Divine Love who are joyfully and generously devoted to serving in the Shrine and the whole range of its different good works. I greet the Vicar, Cardinal Camillo Ruini, and the Auxiliary Bishop of the Southern Sector of Rome, Bishop Paolo Schiavon, and all of you, dear brothers and sisters, who are here in large numbers.

We have recited the Holy Rosary going through the five "Joyful" Mysteries, which portray to the eyes of the heart the beginnings of our salvation, from Jesus' conception in the Virgin Mary's womb, brought about by the Holy Spirit, until he was found in the temple of Jerusalem when he was 12 years old, listening to the teachers and asking them questions.

We have repeated and made our own the Angel's words: "Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with

you!", and also the words with which St Elizabeth welcomed the Virgin who went with haste to help and serve her: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!".

We have contemplated the docile faith of Mary, who trusted in God without reserve and put herself entirely in his hands. Like the shepherds, we too have felt close to the Child Jesus lying in the manger and recognized and adored him as the eternal Son of God who, through love, became our brother, hence, our one Saviour.

We too entered the temple with Mary and Joseph, to offer the Child to God and to carry out the rite of purification: and here, together with salvation, we felt ourselves anticipating, in the words of the elderly Simeon, the contradictory sign of the Cross, and of the sword that beneath the Cross of the Son was to pierce the Mother's soul, thereby making her not only the Mother of God but also Mother of us all.

Dear brothers and sisters, in this Shrine we venerate Mary Most Holy with the title "Our Lady of Divine Love".

Thus, full light is shed on the bond that united Mary with the Holy Spirit from the very beginning of her existence when, as she was being conceived, the Spirit, the eternal Love of the Father and of the Son, made their dwelling within her and preserved her from any shadow of sin; then again, when the same Spirit brought the Son of God into being in her womb; and yet again when, with the grace of the Spirit, Mary's own words were fulfilled through the whole span of her life: "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord"; and lastly, when, by the power of the Holy Spirit, Mary was taken up physically to be beside the Son in the glory of God the Father.

"Mary", I wrote in the Encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*, "is a woman who loves.... As a believer who in faith thinks with God's thoughts and wills with God's will, she cannot fail to be a woman who loves" (n. 41). Yes, dear brothers and sisters, Mary is the fruit and sign of the love God has for us, of his tenderness and mercy. Therefore, together with our brothers in the faith of all times and all places, we turn to her in our needs and hopes, in the joyful and sorrowful events of life. My thoughts go at this moment, with deep sympathy, to the family in the Island of Ischia, hit by yesterday's disaster.

In the month of May an increasing number of people come here as pilgrims from the parishes of Rome and also from many other districts, to pray and to enjoy the beauty and restful tranquillity of these places. From here, from this Shrine of Divine Love, we therefore expect powerful help and spiritual support for the Diocese of Rome, for myself, its Bishop, and for the other Bishops my collaborators, for the priests, for families, for vocations, for the poor, the suffering and the sick, for the children and for the elderly, for the entire beloved Italian Nation. We are expecting in particular the inner energy to fulfil the vow made by the Roman People on 4 June 1944, when they solemnly asked Our Lady of Divine Love that this City be preserved from the horrors of war, and they were heard: the vow and the promise, that is, to correct and improve one's own moral conduct to bring

it more into line with that of the Lord Jesus. Today too, there is a need to convert to God, to God who is Love, so that the world may be freed from war and terrorism. We are unfortunately reminded of this by the victims, such as the service men who fell last Thursday in Nassiriya in Iraq, whom we entrust to the motherly intercession of Mary, Queen of Peace.

Dear brothers and sisters, from this Shrine of Our Lady of Divine Love, I therefore renew the invitation I expressed in the Encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*: "To practise love and in this way to cause the light of God to enter into the world" (n. 39). Amen!

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