



The Holy See

FEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO A GROUP OF BISHOPS
FROM THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

Castel Gandolfo

Friday, 8 September 1989

Dear Brothers in Christ,

This morning, gathered around the altar, we prepare to celebrate the *feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary*. The Church's commemoration of Mary's birth leads us to meditate on her closeness to us in our human condition. She too was born a daughter of the human race. She is our sister in the human family. At the same time we joyfully recognize that she is far above us. We are happy to call her our beloved Mother in the spiritual order. Her special greatness is the result of the unique and extraordinary mystery of God's intervention "in the fullness of time" when he no longer spoke through the prophets, but through his Son. Because Mary offered herself as the humble servant of the Lord, the eternal Word was made flesh in her womb and the immense riches of redemptive love were released into human history. The whole life of the Church in every age and in every place is inseparably linked to the young Jewish woman who responded to the Angel's message with total obedience to God's will: "Let it be to me according to your word" (*Luc. 1, 38*).

In God's eternal plan, Mary was called to give birth to the Savior whose Sacrifice on the Cross redeemed the world from its bondage to sin and death. In fulfilling her vocation she remained closely united to the saving work of her Son. As the Mother of the Church, "Mater Ecclesiae", Mary invites all who have been reborn in Christ towards an ever deeper contemplation of the mystery of the Church. She inspires us to recognize the lofty vocation that each of us has received in Christ and guides us on our way towards the hope that has been stored up for us in heaven.

As we rejoice in her birth, let us invoke Mary's maternal love and care upon our ministry as

Bishops, a ministry which you have been called to exercise in the United States of America. As Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, Mary is the Patroness of your country. May she continue to draw all the priests, religious and laity of your nation toward her divine Son. And through her prayers, may each of us find the strength we need to live fully our vocation as ministers of Christ's one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.

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