



The Holy See

BENEDICT XVI

ANGELUS

St Peter's Square

Fourth Sunday of Advent, 18 December 2011

[Video]

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

On this fourth and last Sunday of Advent, this year the liturgy presents the narrative of the Angel's announcement to Mary. Contemplating the amazing icon of the Blessed Virgin at the moment when she receives the divine message and gives her answer, we are enlightened within by the light of truth that shines from that mystery ever new. In particular I would like to reflect briefly on the importance of Mary's virginity, namely that she conceived Jesus while remaining a virgin

Against the background of the event of Nazareth is the prophecy of Isaiah. "Behold, a young virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Is 7:14). This ancient promise found superabundant fulfilment in the Incarnation of the Son of God. Indeed, not only did the Virgin Mary conceive, but she did so through the work of the Holy Spirit, that is, God himself.

The human being who came to life in her womb took Mary's flesh, but his existence derived totally from God. He is fully man, made of clay — to use the biblical symbol — but comes from on high, from Heaven. The fact that Mary conceived while remaining a virgin is thus essential to the knowledge of Jesus and to our faith, because it testifies that it was God's initiative and, above all, it reveals *who* the conceived being *was*.

As the Gospel says: "the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God" (Lk 1:35). In this sense, the *virginity* of Mary and the *divinity* of Jesus guarantees each other. This is what makes

that single question so important that Mary, “greatly troubled”, asks the Angel: “How can this be, since I have no husband?” (Lk 1:34). Mary was very wise in her simplicity. She did not doubt God’s power, but she wanted to better understand his will, in order to conform herself completely to this will. Mary was infinitely overcome by the Mystery, yet she occupied perfectly the place which, in its centre had been assigned to her. Her heart and her mind are fully humble and precisely because of her unique humility, God awaits this young woman’s “yes” in order to carry out his plan. He respects her dignity and her freedom. Mary’s “yes” entailed motherhood and virginity as a whole. She wanted everything in her to glorify God and he wanted the Son, born of her, to be totally a gift of grace.

Dear friends, Mary’s virginity is unique and unrepeatable; but its spiritual meaning concerns every Christian, who is essentially linked to faith. In fact, those who put deep trust in God’s love welcome Jesus and his divine life within them through the action of the Holy Spirit. This is the mystery of Christmas! I hope that you will all experience it with deep joy.

After the Angelus :

Dear brothers and sisters, yesterday in Madrid, 22 missionaries Oblates of Mary Immaculate and a layman were beatified. They were killed in Spain in 1936 for simply being zealous witnesses of the Gospel. The hope that their sacrifice will continue to bear abundant fruits of conversion and reconciliation is joined with joy in their beatification.

I would like to reassure my closeness to the populations of the southern Philippines, hit by a violent tropical storm. I pray for the victims, many of whom are children, for the homeless and for the many who have been dispersed.

I greet all the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors present at this Angelus prayer. The Gospel of today’s liturgy recounts the Archangel Gabriel’s Annunciation to the Virgin Mary, that she would conceive and bear a son to be called Jesus. Just as the Immaculate Virgin brought God to us, may we be not afraid to let her bring us to God. In this final week of Advent, let us intensify our efforts to prepare for his coming. Upon you and your loved ones, I invoke the blessings of Almighty God!

I wish everyone a good Sunday and a good preparation for Holy Christmas.

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