



# The Holy See

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BENEDICT XVI

## **GENERAL AUDIENCE**

*Wednesday, 26 October 2005*

### **Canticle [Phil 2,6-11](#)**

*Jesus Christ is Lord!*

Evening Prayer - Sunday of Week Fourth

1. Once again, following the itinerary proposed by the Liturgy of Vespers with various Psalms and Canticles, we have heard resound the wonderful and fundamental hymn St Paul inserted into the Letter to the Philippians (2: 6-11).

Already in the past we have underlined that this text contains a two-way movement: descent and ascent. In the first, Christ Jesus, from the splendour of divinity which by nature belongs to him, chooses to descend to the humiliation of "death on a cross". In this way he shows himself to be truly man and our Redeemer, with an authentic and full participation in our human reality of suffering and death.

2. The second movement, upwards, reveals the paschal glory of Christ, who manifests himself once more after death in the splendour of his divine majesty.

The Father, who welcomed his Son's act of obedience in the Incarnation and passion, now "exalts" him in a supreme way, as the Greek text tells us. This exaltation is expressed not only through the enthronement at God's right hand, but also with the conferral upon Christ of a "name which is above every name" (v. 9).

Now, in biblical language, "name" indicates a person's true essence and specific function, manifesting his or her intimate and profound reality. To the Son, who, for love, was humiliated in

death, the Father confers an incomparable dignity, the "Name" above all others, that of "Lord", of God himself.

3. Indeed, the proclamation of faith, chorally intoned from Heaven, earth and the netherworld lying prostrate in adoration, is clear and explicit: "Jesus Christ is Lord" (v. 11). In Greek, it is affirmed that Jesus is *Kyrios*, undoubtedly a royal title, which in the Greek translation of the Bible renders the name of God revealed to Moses sacred and unutterable. With the name *Kyrios*, Jesus Christ is recognized as true God.

On the one hand, then, there is the recognition of the universal sovereignty of Jesus Christ, who receives honour from all of creation, seen as a subject lying prostrate at his feet. On the other, however, the acclamation of faith declares Christ existing in the divine form or condition, thereby presenting him as worthy of adoration.

4. In this hymn the reference made to the scandal of the cross (cf. I Cor 1: 23), and even earlier to the true humanity of the Word made flesh (cf. Jn 1: 14), is interwoven with and culminates in the event of the Resurrection. The sacrificial obedience of the Son is followed by the glorifying response of the Father, to which adoration is united on the part of humanity and creation. Christ's singularity emerges from his function as Lord of the redeemed world, which has been conferred upon him because of his perfect obedience "unto death". In the Son, the project of salvation reaches fulfilment and the faithful are invited, especially in the liturgy, to announce and to live the fruits [of salvation].

This is the destination where the Christological hymn leads us, upon which for centuries the Church meditates, sings and considers as a guide of life: "Have this mind among yourselves, which was in Christ Jesus" (Phil 2: 5).

5. Let us now turn to the meditation on our hymn that has been interwoven with great wisdom by St Gregory of Nazianzus. In a poem in honour of Christ, the great fourth-century Doctor of the Church declares that Jesus Christ "does not empty himself of any part that makes up his divine nature, and notwithstanding this he saves me like a healer who bends over festering wounds.... He was of the line of David, but was the Creator of Adam; he was made of flesh, but was also a stranger to it; he was generated by a mother, but by a virgin mother; he was limited, but also immense; he was born in a stable, but a star led the Magi to him, who brought him gifts and bowed down and knelt before him. As a mortal man he battled with the devil, but, invincible as he was, he overcame the tempter with a three-fold strategy.... He was victim, but also High Priest; he was sacrificed, but was God; he offered his blood to God and in this way he purified the entire world. A cross raised him up from the earth, but sin remained nailed to it.... He descended to the dead, but came back from the netherworld redeeming many who were dead. The first event is typical of human misery, but the second is part of the richness of the incorporeal being..., that earthly form the immortal Son takes upon himself because he loves us" (*Carmina arcana*, 2: *Collana di Testi*

*Patristici*, LVIII, Rome, 1986, pp. 236-238).

At the end of this meditation I want to underline two phrases for our lives. In the first place, this admonition of St Paul: "Have this mind among yourselves, which was in Christ Jesus". To learn to feel as Jesus felt; to conform our way of thinking, deciding and acting to the sentiments of Jesus. We will take up this path if we look to conform our sentiments to those of Jesus. Let us take up the right path.

The other phrase is that of St Gregory of Nazianzus. "He, Jesus, loves us". These tender words are a great consolation and comfort for us; but also a great responsibility, day after day.

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### *To special groups*

I offer a warm welcome to all the English-speaking visitors and pilgrims present at today's audience. I extend particular greetings to the groups from England, Wales, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Japan, Canada and the United States of America. I wish you all a pleasant stay in Rome!

I then greet the *young people*, *sick people* and *newly-weds*. I address a special thought to you, dear *sick people*, who are very numerous at this gathering, and especially to the large group of children from the "City of Hope" of Padua. Dear friends, as we heard in the catechesis, the Cross of Christ makes us understand the true meaning of suffering and pain. Spiritually unite yourselves to Jesus Crucified and trustfully abandon yourselves into the hands of Mary, calling upon her unceasingly with the Rosary.

The month of October, dedicated to the Holy Rosary, is drawing to a close. I invite you to recite with devotion this prayer that is so dear to the tradition of the Christian people. We pray for the many needs of the Church and the world, in a special way for the populations stricken by the earthquake and by physical and natural disasters. May our spiritual and material support never be lacking for those who are in difficulty.

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