



The Holy See

BENEDICT XVI

GENERAL AUDIENCE

Papal Summer Residence, Castel Gandolfo

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Connection between the Blessed Virgin Mary and the priesthood

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The celebration of the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, next Saturday, is at hand and we are in the context of the Year for Priest. I therefore wish to speak of the link between Our Lady and the priesthood. This connection is deeply rooted in the Mystery of the Incarnation.

When God decided to become man in his Son, he needed the freely-spoken "yes" of one of his creatures. God does not act against our freedom. And something truly extraordinary happens: God makes himself dependent on the free decision, the "yes" of one of his creatures; he waits for this "yes". St Bernard of Clairvaux explained dramatically in one of his homilies this crucial moment in universal history when Heaven, earth and God himself wait for what this creature will say.

Mary's "yes" is therefore the door through which God was able to enter the world, to become man. So it is that Mary is truly and profoundly involved in the Mystery of the Incarnation, of our salvation. And the Incarnation, the Son's becoming man, was the beginning that prepared the ground for the gift of himself; for giving himself with great love on the Cross to become Bread for the life of the world. Hence sacrifice, priesthood and Incarnation go together and Mary is at the heart of this mystery.

Let us now go to the Cross. Before dying, Jesus sees his Mother beneath the Cross and he sees the beloved son. This beloved son is certainly a person, a very important individual, but he is

more; he is an example, a prefiguration of all beloved disciples, of all the people called by the Lord to be the "beloved disciple" and thus also particularly of priests. Jesus says to Mary: "Woman, behold, your son!" (Jn 19: 26). It is a sort of testament: he entrusts his Mother to the care of the son, of the disciple. But he also says to the disciple: "Behold, your mother!" (Jn 19: 27). The Gospel tells us that from that hour St John, the beloved son, took his mother Mary "to his own home". This is what it says in the [English] translation; but the Greek text is far deeper, far richer. We could translate it: he took Mary into his inner life, his inner being, "eis tà idia", into the depths of his being. To take Mary with one means to introduce her into the dynamism of one's own entire existence it is not something external and into all that constitutes the horizon of one's own apostolate. It seems to me that one can, therefore, understand how the special relationship of motherhood that exists between Mary and priests may constitute the primary source, the fundamental reason for her special love for each one of them. In fact, Mary loves them with predilection for two reasons: because they are more like Jesus, the supreme love of her heart, and because, like her, they are committed to the mission of proclaiming, bearing witness to and giving Christ to the world. Because of his identification with and sacramental conformation to Jesus, Son of God and Son of Mary, every priest can and must feel that he really is a specially beloved son of this loftiest and humblest of Mothers.

The [Second Vatican Council](#) invites priests to look to Mary as to the perfect model for their existence, invoking her as "Mother of the supreme and eternal Priest, as Queen of Apostles, and as Protectress of their ministry". The Council continues, "priests should always venerate and love her, with a filial devotion and worship" (cf. [Presbyterorum Ordinis](#), n. 18). The Holy Curé d'Ars, whom we are remembering in particular in this Year, used to like to say: "Jesus Christ, after giving us all that he could give us, wanted further to make us heirs to his most precious possession, that is, his Holy Mother (B. Nodet, *Il pensiero e l'anima del Curato d'Ars*, Turin 1967, p. 305). This applies for every Christian, for all of us, but in a special way for priests. Dear brothers and sisters, let us pray that Mary will make all priests, in all the problems of today's world, conform with the image of her Son Jesus, as stewards of the precious treasure of his love as the Good Shepherd. Mary, Mother of priests, pray for us!

To special groups

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I offer a warm welcome to the English-speaking visitors present at today's Audience, including the Sisters of St Anne, the altar servers from Malta, and the pilgrims from Australia and the United States of America. As the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin draws near in this Year of the Priest, my Catechesis today is centred on Mary the Mother of priests. She looks upon them with special affection as her sons. Indeed, their mission is similar to hers; priests are called to bring forth Christ's saving love into the world. On the Cross, Jesus invites all believers, especially

his closest disciples, to love and venerate Mary as their Mother. Let us pray that all priests will make a special place for the Blessed Virgin in their lives, and seek her assistance daily as they bear witness to the Gospel of Jesus. Upon you and your families I invoke God's blessings of joy and peace!

I now address the *young people*, the *sick* and the *newlyweds*. Yesterday we celebrated the Memorial of St Clare of Assisi, who was able to live her adherence to Christ with courage and generosity. Imitate her example, particularly you, dear *young people*, so that like her you may respond faithfully to the Lord's call. I encourage you, dear *sick people*, to be united with the suffering Jesus as you carry your cross with faith. And may you, dear *newlyweds*, be apostles of the Gospel of love in your family.

After the Catechesis, Pope Benedict XVI also appealed for solidarity and prayer for the peoples of Eastern Asia and Japan.

Lastly, my thoughts turn to the numerous peoples who have been hit by a violent typhoon in the past few days in the Philippines, in Taiwan, in certain south-Eastern Provinces of the People's Republic of China and in Japan, which latter country has also been sorely tried by a strong earthquake.

I wish to express my spiritual closeness to all who are in conditions of serious hardship, and I ask everyone to pray for them and for all those who have lost their life. I hope they will not be left without the comfort of solidarity and material assistance.

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