



The Holy See

BENEDICT XVI

GENERAL AUDIENCE

Castel Gandolfo

Wednesday, 17 August 2011

[\[Video\]](#)

Meditation

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We are still in the light of the Feast of the Assumption, which — as I said — is a Feast of hope. Mary has arrived in Heaven and this is our destination: we can all reach Heaven. The question is: how? Mary has arrived there. It is she — the Gospel says — “who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her from the Lord” (Lk 1:45).

Thus Mary believed, she entrusted herself to God, bent her will to the will of the Lord and so was truly on the most direct road, the road to Heaven. Believing, entrusting oneself to the Lord and complying with his will: this is the essential approach.

Today I do not want to talk about this whole journey of faith; I want to speak of only one small aspect of the life of prayer — which is life in contact with God — namely, meditation. And what is meditation? It means “remembering” all that God has done and not forgetting his many great benefits (cf. Ps 103[102]:2b).

We often see only the negative things; we must also keep in mind all that is positive, the gifts that God has made us; we must be attentive to the positive signs that come from God and must remember them. Let us therefore speak of a type of prayer which in the Christian tradition is

known as “mental prayer”. We are usually familiar with vocal prayer.

The heart and the mind must of course take part in this prayer. However we are speaking today of a meditation that does not consist of words but rather is a way of making contact with the heart of God in our mind. And here Mary is a very real model. Luke the Evangelist repeated several times that Mary, “kept all these things, pondering them in her heart” (2:19; cf. 2:51b). As a good custodian, she does not forget, she was attentive to all that the Lord told her and did for her, and she meditated, in other words she considered various things, pondering them in her heart.

Therefore, she who “believed” in the announcement of the Angel and made herself the means of enabling the eternal Word of the Most High to become incarnate also welcomed in her heart the wonderful miracle of that human-divine birth; she meditated on it and paused to reflect on what God was working within her, in order to welcome the divine will in her life and respond to it. The mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God and of Mary’s motherhood is of such magnitude that it requires interiorization; it is not only something physical which God brought about within her, but is something that demanded interiorization on the part of Mary who endeavours to deepen her understanding of it, to interpret its meaning, to comprehend its consequences and implications.

Thus, day after day, in the silence of ordinary life, Mary continued to treasure in her heart the sequence of marvellous events that she witnessed until the supreme test of the Cross and the glory of the Resurrection. Mary lived her life to the full, her daily duties, her role as a mother, but she knew how to reserve an inner space to reflect on the word and will of God, on what was occurring within her and on the mysteries of the life of her Son.

In our time we are taken up with so many activities and duties, worries and problems: we often tend to fill all of the spaces of the day, without leaving a moment to pause and reflect and to nourish our spiritual life, contact with God.

Mary teaches us how necessary it is to find in our busy day, moments for silent recollection, to meditate on what the Lord wants to teach us, on how he is present and active in the world and in our life: to be able to stop for a moment and meditate. St Augustine compares meditation on the mysteries of God to the assimilation of food and uses a verb that recurs throughout the Christian tradition, “to ruminate”; that is, the mysteries of God should continually resonate within us so that they become familiar to us, guide our lives and nourish us, as does the food we need to sustain us.

St Bonaventure, moreover, with reference to the words of Sacred Scripture, says that “they should always be ruminated upon so as to be able to gaze on them with ardent application of the soul,” (*Coll. In Hex*, ed. Quaracchi 1934, p. 218). To meditate, therefore, means to create within us a situation of recollection, of inner silence, in order to reflect upon and assimilate the mysteries of our faith and what God is working within us; and not merely on the things that come and go.

We may undertake this “ruminatio” in various ways: for example, by taking a brief passage of Sacred Scripture, especially the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles or the Letters of the Apostles, or a passage from a spiritual author that brings us closer and makes the reality of God more present in our day; or we can even, ask our confessor or spiritual director to recommend something to us.

By reading and reflecting on what we have read, dwelling on it, trying to understand what it is saying to me, what it says today, to open our spirit to what the Lord wants to tell us and teach us. The Holy Rosary is also a prayer of meditation: in repeating the Hail Mary we are asked to think about and reflect on the Mystery which we have just proclaimed. But we can also reflect on some intense spiritual experience, or on words that stayed with us when we were taking part in the Sunday Eucharist. So, you see, there are many ways to meditate and thereby to make contact with God and to approach God; and in this way, to be journeying on towards Heaven.

Dear friends, making time for God regularly is a fundamental element for spiritual growth; it will be the Lord himself who gives us the taste for his mysteries, his words, his presence and action, for feeling how beautiful it is when God speaks with us; he will enable us to understand more deeply what he expects of me. This, ultimately, is the very aim of meditation: to entrust ourselves increasingly to the hands of God, with trust and love, certain that in the end it is only by doing his will that we are truly happy.

To special groups:

I offer a cordial welcome to all the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors here today, especially those from Malta, South Korea, Nigeria and Canada. Through the intercession of Our Lady, whose Assumption we celebrated on Monday, may you and your loved ones draw ever closer to Jesus her Son. Upon all of you I invoke God’s abundant blessings!

Tomorrow, as you know, I shall be going to Madrid where I will have the joy of meeting many young people gathered there for the 26th World Youth Day. With your prayers, I ask you to join in spirit in this important ecclesial event. I thank you for your prayers. Thank you.