



The Holy See

BENEDICT XVI

GENERAL AUDIENCE

Castel Gandolfo

Wednesday, 22 August 2012

[[Video](#)]

Liturgical Memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today is the liturgical Memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary, invoked by the title: “Queen”. It is a recently instituted feast, although its origins and the devotion to her are ancient. It was in fact established in 1954, at the end of the Marian Year, by Venerable [Pius XII](#) who fixed the date as 31 May (cf. Encyclical Letter [Ad Caeli Reginam](#), 11 October 1954: AAS 46 [1954], 625-640). On this occasion the Pope said that Mary was Queen more than any other creature because of the sublime dignity of her soul and the excellence of the gifts she received. She never ceases to bestow upon humanity all the treasures of her love and tender care (cf. *Discourse in honour of Mary Queen*, 1 November 1954). Now, after the post-conciliar reform of the liturgical calendar, this feast is set eight days after the Solemnity of the Assumption to emphasize the close link between Mary’s royal nature and her glorification in body and soul beside her Son. In the Second Vatican Council’s Constitution on the Church we read: Mary “was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory... and exalted by the Lord as Queen over all things, that she might be the more fully conformed to her Son” ([Lumen Gentium](#), n. 59).

This is the origin of today’s feast: Mary is Queen because she is uniquely conformed to her Son, both on the earthly journey and in heavenly glory. Ephrem the Syrian, Syria’s great saint, said of Mary’s queenship that it derives from her motherhood: she is Mother of the Lord, of the King of

kings (cf. Is 9:1-6) and she points Jesus out to us as our life, our salvation and our hope. In his Apostolic Exhortation *Marialis Cultus* the Servant of God Paul VI recalled: "In the Virgin Mary everything is relative to Christ and dependent upon him. It was with a view to Christ that God the Father, from all eternity, chose her to be the all-holy Mother and adorned her with gifts of the Spirit granted to no one else" (n. 25).

Now however, let us ask ourselves: what does "Mary Queen" mean? Is it solely a title, together with others, a crown, an ornament like others? What does it mean? What is this queenship? As mentioned above, it is a consequence of her being united to the Son, of her being in heaven, that is, in communion with God; she shares in God's responsibility for the world and in God's love for the world. There is a worldly or common idea of a king or queen: a person with great power and wealth. But this is not the kind of royalty of Jesus and Mary. Let us think of the Lord; the royalty and kingship of Christ is interwoven with humility, service and love. It is above all serving, helping and loving. Let us remember that Jesus on the Cross was proclaimed king with this inscription written by Pilate: "The King of the Jews" (cf. Mk 15:26). On the Cross, at that moment, he is shown to be King; and how is he King? By suffering with us and for us, by loving to the end, and in this way governing and creating truth, love and justice. Let us also think of another moment: at the Last Supper he bows down to wash the feet of his followers.

Consequently Jesus' kingship has nothing to do with that of the powerful of this earth. He is a King who serves his servants; he demonstrated this throughout his life; and the same is true of Mary. She is Queen in her service to God for humanity, she is a Queen of love who lives the gift of herself to God so as to enter into the plan of man's salvation. She answered the Angel: "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord" (cf. Lk 1:38) and in the *Magnificat* she sings: God has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden (cf. Lk 1:48). She helps us. She is Queen precisely by loving us, by helping us in our every need; she is our sister, a humble handmaid.

And so we have already reached this point: how does Mary exercise this queenship of service and love? By watching over us, her children: the children who turn to her in prayer, to thank her or to ask her for her motherly protection and her heavenly help, perhaps after having lost our way, or when we are oppressed by suffering or anguish because of the sorrowful and harrowing vicissitudes of life. In serenity or in life's darkness let us address Mary, entrusting ourselves to her continuous intercession so that she may obtain for us from the Son every grace and mercy we need for our pilgrimage on the highways of the world.

Through the Virgin Mary let us turn with trust to the One who rules the world and holds in his hand the future of the universe. For centuries she has been invoked as the celestial Queen of Heaven; in the Litany of Loreto after the prayer of the holy Rosary, she is implored eight times: as Queen of Angels, of Patriarchs, of Prophets, of Apostles, of Martyrs, of Confessors, of Virgins, of all the Saints and of Families. The rhythm of these ancient invocations and daily prayers, such as the *Salve Regina*, help us to understand that the Blessed Virgin, as our Mother beside her Son Jesus

in the glory of heaven, is always with us in the daily events of our life.

The title “Queen” is thus a title of trust, joy and love. And we know that the One who holds a part of the world’s destinies in her hand is good, that she loves us and helps us in our difficulties.

Dear friends, the devotion to Our Lady is an important element of spiritual life. In our prayers let us not fail to address her with trust. Mary will not fail to intercede for us with her Son. Looking at her, let us imitate her faith, her full availability to God’s plan of love, her generous acceptance of Jesus. Let us learn how to live from Mary. Mary is the Queen of Heaven who is close to God but she is also the Mother who is close to each one of us, who loves us and listens to our voice. Thank you for your attention.

To special groups:

I welcome all the English-speaking pilgrims present at today’s Audience, especially the groups from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria, Japan and the United States of America. I also greet the young altar servers from Malta and their families. Today the Church celebrates the Queenship of the Blessed Virgin Mary. May the prayers of Our Lady guide us along our pilgrimage of faith, that we may share in her Son’s victory and reign with him in his eternal Kingdom. Upon all of you I invoke the Lord’s abundant blessings!

Lastly, I address a cordial greeting to the Italian-speaking pilgrims; in particular to the Sisters of Mary Most Holy Consoler, who have gathered for their General Chapter, and the Chaldean Sisters, Daughters of Mary Immaculate, who are involved in a generous and valuable service to the peoples of Iraq. I greet those taking part in the meeting of the Association of Rogationist Families and in the summer meeting for Major Seminarians, as well as the couples of *newlyweds*. I ask everyone to spend time on Christian formation, in order to be faithful disciples of Christ, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. And now let us sing the “Our Father” together.