



The Holy See

***LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
ON THE OCCASION OF THE NATIONAL PILGRIMAGE
TO THE SHRINE OF NUESTRA SEÑORA DEL PILAR OF SARAGOSSA***

*Beloved Brothers in the Episcopate,
Dear Priests and Deacons,
Men and Women Religious and Catholic faithful of Spain,*

I am pleased to address my cordial greeting to you and I spiritually join you on the national pilgrimage to the Shrine of *Nuestra Señora del Pilar* of Saragossa, to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the definition of the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception and to renew the consecration of Spain to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, which took place 50 years ago.

1. With this pilgrimage, you want to deepen the admirable mystery of Mary and to reflect upon her inexhaustible resources for every Christian's call to holiness.

As the Year of the Immaculate Conception coincides with the Year of the Eucharist, at the school of Mary we are better able to "learn" Christ. Contemplating her as the "Woman of the Eucharist", she walks with us to meet her Son, who is with us "always, until the end of the world" (Mt 28: 20), especially in the Most Holy Sacrament.

2. The Immaculate reflects the Father's mercy. Conceived without sin, she was able to forgive, at the foot of the Cross, those who had abandoned and wounded her Son. As "Advocate", she helps us in our needs and intercedes for us before her Son, telling him, as she did at Cana in Galilee, "They have no more wine" (Jn 2: 3), trusting in the fact that his heart, full of goodness, will not defraud us in a moment of difficulty.

By indicating clearly, "Do whatever he tells you" (Jn 2: 5), she invites us to draw close to Christ and, in this proximity, to experience, feel and see "how good is the Lord". This experience endows the human heart with greater far-sightedness to appreciate all that is good, beautiful and true.

3. Sustained by the paternal care of Joseph, Mary welcomed her Son. In the home of Nazareth, Jesus reached adulthood, in the bosom of a family, humanly splendid and pervaded by the divine mystery. It continues to be a model for all families.

In this regard, the family, through home life, fulfils its human and Christian vocation, sharing joys and hopes in an atmosphere of understanding and reciprocal help. Therefore, the human being who is born, develops and is formed in the family, is able to start out on the journey of good without hesitation, without allowing himself or herself to be disoriented by customs or ideologies unworthy of the human person.

4. In this moment of discernment for many hearts, you Spanish Bishops turn your gaze towards the one who, with complete availability, welcomed the life of God that entered history. For this, Mary Immaculate is intimately united to the redemptive action of Christ, who did not come to "condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him" (Jn 3: 17).

I know that the Catholic Church in Spain is ready to take decided steps in its evangelization projects. And so, it is to be hoped that its true nature and mission will be understood and accepted, as it seeks to promote the common good of all, both the person and society.

As a consequence, the transmission of faith and the religious practice of believers cannot remain confined to the purely private sphere.

5. I place all your worries and aspirations at the feet of the Virgin, trusting in the fact that the Holy Spirit will move many people so that they generously love life and welcome the poor, loving them with God's same love.

To Mary Most Holy, who generated the Author of life, I entrust every human life from the first moment of its existence until its natural death. I ask her to protect all families from every kind of social injustice, from all that degrades their dignity and threatens their freedom; and for respect for religious freedom and the freedom of conscience of every person.

I call upon the Immaculate Virgin with full trust, so that she protect the people of Spain, its men and women, in order that all contribute to the attainment of the common good, and particularly to the foundation of the civilization of love. I also encourage each and all to live in your particular Church in a spirit of communion and of service, and I exhort you to give devout witness to the Virgin Mary and to tireless love of neighbour.

I invite you who are participating in this great pilgrimage to the Shrine of *Nuestra Señora del Pilar* of Saragossa to deepen Marian devotion in your towns and cities, where Mary awaits you in the countless churches and shrines that fill the Country of Spain; and in the parishes, too, as well as in communities and in the domestic family. Return there full of joy with the Apostolic Blessing that I

most affectionately impart to you.

From the Vatican, 19 May 2005

BENEDICT XVI

Copyright © Libreria Editrice Vaticana

Copyright © Dicastero per la Comunicazione - Libreria Editrice Vaticana