



The Holy See

BLESSING AND INAUGURATION OF THE STATUE
OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY OF "MONTE MARIO" RECENTLY RESTORED
AND VISIT TO THE DOMINICAN MONASTERY
OF "SANTA MARIA DEL ROSARIO"

CELEBRATION OF THE MIDDLE HOUR
AND MEETING WITH THE CLOISTERED NUNS

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

Dominican Monastery of "Santa Maria del Rosario"
Thursday, 24 June 2010

Dear Sisters,

I address to each one of you the words of Psalm 125 [124] that we have just prayed: "Do good, O Lord, to those who are good, and to those who are upright in their hearts!"(v.4). I greet you first of all with this wish: may the goodness of the Lord be upon you. I greet your Mother Prioress in particular and I warmly thank her for the kind words she has addressed to me on behalf of the Community. I accepted with great joy the invitation to visit this Monastery, to be able to reflect with you at the foot of the image of Our Lady Acheropita of St Sixtus, formerly Protectress of the Roman Monasteries of St Mary in Tempulo and of St Sixtus.

We have prayed the Midday Prayer together, a small part of that Liturgical Prayer which marks the rhythm of your day as cloistered religious and makes you interpreters of the Church-Bride, united in a special way with her Lord. Your consecration to the Lord in silence and in hiddenness is rendered fertile and fruitful through this choral prayer which culminates in daily participation in the Eucharistic Sacrifice. This is not only with regard to the journey of personal sanctification and purification but to that apostolate of intercession which you carry out for the entire Church, so that she may appear pure and holy before the Lord. You who are well acquainted with the efficacy of

prayer, experience every day all the graces of sanctification it can obtain for the Church.

Dear Sisters, the community you form is a place in which it is possible to dwell in the Lord; for you it is the new Jerusalem to which the tribes of the Lord go up to praise the name of the Lord (cf. Ps 122[121]:4). Be grateful to divine Providence for the sublime and free gift of the monastic vocation, to which the Lord has called you through no merit of your own. With Isaiah you can say: "The Lord formed me from the womb to be his servant" (cf. Is 49:5). Even before you were born, the Lord had reserved your heart for himself, to fill it with his love. Through the sacrament of Baptism you received divine Grace within you and, immersed in his death and Resurrection, you were consecrated to Jesus, in order to belong exclusively to him. The form of contemplative life, which you received from the hands of St Dominic in the manner of the cloister, place you as living, vital members in the heart of the Mystical Body of the Lord, which is the Church; and just as the heart makes the blood circulate and keeps the whole body alive, so your hidden existence with Christ, where work and prayer alternate, helps to sustain the Church, the instrument of salvation for every person whom the Lord has redeemed with his Blood.

You draw from this inexhaustible source with prayer, presenting to the Most High the spiritual and material needs of so many brothers and sisters in difficulty, the confused lives of those who have drifted away from the Lord. How can we not be moved by compassion for those who seem to be wandering purposelessly? How could we fail to hope that they may encounter Jesus in their life, the only encounter that gives meaning to existence? The holy wish that the Kingdom of God may be established in every human heart is identified with prayer itself, as St Augustine teaches us: *"Ipsium desiderium tuum, oratio tua est; et si continuum desiderium, continua oratio"*: your desire is your prayer; and if it is an on-going desire, it is also continuous prayer (cf. *Ep.* 130. 18-20); therefore, as a fire that burns and is never extinguished, the heart is made alert, it never ceases to desire God and always raises a hymn of praise to him.

Consequently, dear Sisters, may you recognize that your heart, in all that you do, over and above individual moments of prayer, continues to be guided by the desire to love God. Recognize, with the Bishop of Hippo, that it is the Lord who has instilled his love in your hearts, a desire that enlarges the heart even to the point of making it capable of receiving God himself. (cf. *In ev. Jo. tr.* 40, 10).

This is the horizon of the earthly pilgrimage! This is your destination! For this reason you have chosen to live in hiddenness, renouncing earthly goods: to desire above all things that good that has no equal, that precious pearl for which it is worth giving up every other good, to gain possession of it.

May you say every day your "yes" to God's plans with the same humility with which the Blessed Virgin said her "yes". May she, who received the Word of God in silence, guide you in your daily virginal consecration so that you may experience hiddenness, the profound intimacy that she herself lived with Jesus. As I invoke her motherly intercession upon you, together with that of St

Dominic, St Catherine of Siena and of all the Saints of the Dominican Order, I impart to you all a special Apostolic Blessing which I willingly extend to the people who entrust themselves to your prayers.

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