



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
DURING THE PRAYER MEETING IN THE VATICAN GARDENS
FOR THE CONCLUSION OF THE MARIAN MONTH OF MAY**

*Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes in the Vatican Gardens
Tuesday, 31 May 2005*

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I join you with great joy at the end of this prayer meeting organized by the Vicariate of Vatican City. I note with pleasure that a large number of you have gathered in the Vatican Gardens for the conclusion of the month of May.

Among you, in particular, are many people who live or work in the Vatican, with their families. I offer a warm greeting to you all; in a special way the Cardinals and Bishops, beginning with Archbishop Angelo Comastri who has led this prayer meeting. I then greet the priests and the men and women religious present, with a thought also for the contemplative Sisters of *Mater Ecclesiae* Monastery who are spiritually united to us.

Dear friends, you have wound your way up to the Grotto of Lourdes reciting the holy Rosary, as if to respond to the Virgin's invitation to raise your spirit towards Heaven. Our Lady accompanies us every day in our prayers. During this special Year of the Eucharist in which we are living, Mary helps us above all to discover ever better the great sacrament of the Eucharist.

In his last Encyclical, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, our beloved Pope John Paul II presented her to us as "Woman of the Eucharist" throughout her life (cf. n. 53). "Woman of the Eucharist" through and through, beginning with her inner disposition: from the Annunciation, when she offered herself for the Incarnation of the Word of God, to the Cross and to the Resurrection; "Woman of the Eucharist" in the period subsequent to Pentecost, when she received in the Sacrament that Body which she had conceived and carried in her womb.

Today, in particular, we pause to meditate on the mystery of the Visitation of the Virgin to St Elizabeth. Mary went to see her elderly cousin Elizabeth, whom everyone said was sterile but who instead had reached the sixth month of a pregnancy given to her by God (cf. Lk 1: 36), carrying in her womb the recently conceived Jesus. She was a young girl but she was not afraid, for God was with her, within her.

In a certain way we can say that her journey was - we like to emphasize in this Year of the Eucharist - the first "Eucharistic procession" in history. Mary, living Tabernacle of God made flesh, is the Ark of the Covenant in whom the Lord visited and redeemed his people. Jesus' presence filled her with the Holy Spirit.

When she entered Elizabeth's house, her greeting was overflowing with grace: John leapt in his mother's womb, as if he were aware of the coming of the One whom he would one day proclaim to Israel. The children exulted, the mothers exulted. This meeting, imbued with the joy of the Holy Spirit, is expressed in the Cantic of the *Magnificat*.

Is this not also the joy of the Church, which ceaselessly welcomes Christ in the holy Eucharist and brings him into the world with the testimony of active charity, steeped in faith and hope? Yes, welcoming Jesus and bringing him to others is the true joy of Christians!

Dear Brothers and Sisters, let us follow and imitate Mary, a deeply Eucharistic soul, and our whole life can become a *Magnificat* (cf. *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, n. 58), praise of God. May this be the grace that we ask from the Virgin Most Holy this evening at the end of the month of May. My Blessing to you all.

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