



The Holy See

**RADIOMESSAGGIO DI SUA SANTITÀ PIO PP. XII
AI PARTECIPANTI AL PRIMO
CONGRESSO MARIANO DEL SUD AFRICA***

Domenica, 4 maggio 1952

Hardly a year has passed since We spoke to you, Venerable Brothers, and to Our dear children who are entrusted to your pastoral care. Our voice then carried a message of joy and felicitation for the establishment of a Catholic hierarchy in the Union of South Africa almost one hundred and fifty years after the first Mass was offered in Cape Town. Today, though the occasion is different, Our greetings go out to you from a heart no less filled with joy and consolation; because during these early days of May you have been gathering together, with a deep sense of gratitude and reverence, to do honour to the ever-blessed Mary, Mother of God.

There is something very fitting, is there not, in that her month follows so closely on the grand solemnity of Easter. The whole Christian world thrills to the Alleluias sung to the risen Saviour. The heart of every Christian, high or low, king or subject, man of State or tiller of the soil or worker in the mines, expands with confident hope: a hope that sweetens the bitter portion of earthly living, a hope that defies the powers of evil in their struggle for human souls and challenges death itself, whose terrors fade away in the light of the glorious resurrection of Christ. For He has but gone before, opening the way for those who belong to Him and will follow after Him, (cfr. *1 Cor.* 15, 23), members of the Body of which He is the Head.

But mark the words of the illustrious African doctor of the Church, St. Augustine. « The Lord has risen » he says, « in that nature He took from you. He could not rise, had He not been dead; nor could He have died but for his having a body of flesh » (*S. Aug. Enarr. in Ps. CXXIX n. 7 - Migne PL, t. 37 col. 1700- 1701*). Now from whom did He receive that body of flesh? « Oh, Queen of heaven, rejoice », the Church answers that question in her thrice-daily chant, « Oh, Queen of heaven, rejoice, because He, whom thou didst carry in thy womb, He has risen as He said ». Yes, dearly beloved, in the loving providence of God, it was Mary's « be it done unto me according to

thy word », that made possible the passion and death and resurrection of the divine Redeemer of the world. That is why one dare not separate the Mother from the Son. His death on Golgotha was her martyrdom; His triumph is her exaltation. The witness of three centuries confirms the fact, as the learned Cardinal Newman pointedly observes, that « Catholics who have honoured the Mother still worship the Son; while those who now have ceased to confess the Son, began by scoffing at the Mother » (*Discourses to Mixed Congregations, Discourse XVII, The Glories of Mary*). With all the ardour of your faith, then, be quick at all times to offer to the Virgin Mother the homage of your gratitude, your love and loyalty.

The Virgin Mother! What a blessed vision of virginal purity and gentle motherhood these words unveil. Is there any wonder, that the beauty, the charm, the holiness of the peerless Virgin Mother has left behind her in the Church militant the sweetest memories « like to choice myrrh » (*Eccli.* 24, 20), and a mighty influence, that not only lifted woman from her especial degradation, but gave her the challenge to become the latent force that would give renewed and refined vitality to civilization. Woman accepted the challenge. The home and civil society have felt the quickening pulse of a life purified by woman's love and holiness. Holiness and all that it implies of courage, self-restraint, patient endurance, kindness, modesty and unworldliness, how gracefully it becomes a woman. It is the source of her greatest power for good; and thrice-blessed is the family circle, where a woman's gentle rule and high ideals point the way of sanctity to those who reverence her beyond all else on earth. One result of this first Marian Congress in your cherished land will be, We trust, that the women of the Union of South Africa will form the high resolve to be worthy clients of the Virgin Mother of God.

We cannot conclude without a word of particular greeting to the zealous sons of the revered Bishop of Marseille, Charles-Eugene de Mazenod. South Africa carries a heavy debt to the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, as does also the Church of God, in whose service they have rounded out a century of toil and self-sacrifice. We are happy to acclaim their merits, and We pray that the Immaculate Mother may continue to procure for them from her divine Son all the graces in abundance, which will enable them to carry on their magnificent apostolate among your people.

To you, Venerable Brothers, to all the clergy and faithful participating in the Marian Congress from a heart filled with paternal affection, We impart the Apostolic Benediction.

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