

Joyful Mysteries with Benedict XVI

1st Joyful Mystery: The Annunciation

“Hail, [rejoice] full of grace, the Lord is with you” (Lk 1:28). At first sight the term *chaire* “rejoice”, seems an ordinary greeting, typical in the Greek world, but if this word is interpreted against the background of the biblical tradition it acquires a far deeper meaning. The same term occurs four times in the Greek version of the Old Testament and always as a proclamation of joy in the coming of the Messiah (cf. Zeph 3:14, Joel 2:21; Zech 9:9; Lam 4:21).

The Angel’s greeting to Mary is therefore an invitation to joy, deep joy. It announces an end to the sadness that exists in the world because of life’s limitations, suffering, death, wickedness, to all that seems to block out the light of the divine goodness. It is a greeting that marks the beginning of the Gospel, the Good News.

In the greeting of the Angel Mary is called “full of grace”. In Greek, the term “grace”, *charis*, has the same linguistic root as the word “joy”. In this term too the source of Mary’s exultation is further clarified: her joy comes from grace, that is, from being in communion with God, from having such a vital connection with Him, from being the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit, totally fashioned by God’s action. Mary is the creature who opened the door to her Creator in a special way, placing herself in His hands without reserve. She lived entirely *from* and *in* her relationship with the Lord; she was disposed to listen, alert to recognizing the signs of God in the journey of his people; she was integrated into a history of faith and hope in God’s promises with which the fabric of her life was woven. And she submitted freely to the Word received, to the divine will in the obedience of faith.

Audience 19 Dec 2012

2nd Joyful Mystery: The Visitation

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 - 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 Canticle 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!

Address Vatican Gardens 31 May 2005

3rd Joyful Mystery: The Birth of Jesus in Bethlehem

God's sign is the baby in need of help and in poverty. Only in their hearts will the shepherds be able to see that this baby fulfils the promise of the prophet Isaiah: "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government will be upon his shoulder" (*Is* 9:5). Exactly the same sign has been given to us.

God's sign is that He makes Himself small for us. This is how He reigns. He does not come with power and outward splendour. He comes as a baby – defenceless and in need of our help. He does not want to overwhelm us with His strength. He takes away our fear of His greatness. He asks for our love: so He makes Himself a child. He wants nothing other from us than our love, through which we spontaneously learn to enter into His feelings, His thoughts and His will – we learn to live with Him and to practise with Him that humility of renunciation that belongs to the very essence of love. God made Himself small so that we could understand Him, welcome Him, and love Him. He became a child, so that the Word could be grasped by us. In this way God teaches us to love the little ones. In this way He teaches us to love the weak. In this way He teaches us respect for children. The child of Bethlehem directs our gaze towards all children who suffer and are abused in the world, the born and the unborn. In all of these it is the Child of Bethlehem who is crying out to us; it is the God who has become small who appeals to us. Let us ask God to help us do our part so that the dignity of children may be respected. May they all experience the light of love, which mankind needs so much more than the material necessities of life.

Homily Midnight Mass Christmas Eve 2006

4th Joyful Mystery: The Presentation of Jesus in the Temple

It is important to note that these two acts — the purification of the mother and the redemption of the son — did not require a visit to the Temple. However, Mary and Joseph wished to fulfil all the prescriptions in Jerusalem. And it is precisely through the prescriptions of the Law, that the principal event is transformed, it becomes the “presentation” of Jesus in the Temple of God, which means the act of offering the Son of the Most High to the Father who sent Him (cf. Lk 1:32, 35).

The words of the Prophet Malachi: “Behold”, says the Lord, “I send My messenger to prepare the way before Me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to His temple; the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming... he will purify the sons of Levi.... Then the offering... will be pleasing to the Lord” (3:1, 3, 4) are fulfilled in Jesus because, thanks to the faith of His parents, He was taken to the Temple “immediately”; and in the act of His “presentation”, that is, the “offering” of Him in person to God the Father, the themes of sacrifice and of the priesthood clearly transpire. The Child Jesus, who is presented in the Temple, is the same person who, as an adult, would purify the Temple (cf. Jn 2:13-22; Mk 11:15, 19ff) and above all make Himself the sacrifice and the High Priest of the new Covenant.

The “salvation” that Jesus brought to His people, and which He embodies in Himself, passed through the Cross, through the violent death that He was to vanquish and to transform with the sacrifice of His life through love. This sacrifice was already foretold in the act of the Presentation in the Temple, an act without any doubt motivated by the traditions of the old Covenant, but that was deeply enlivened by the fullness of faith and love.

Homily 2 Feb 2013

5th Joyful Mystery: The Finding of Jesus in the Temple

The first witnesses of Christ's birth, the shepherds, found themselves not only before the Infant Jesus but also a small family: mother, father and newborn son. God had chosen to reveal Himself by being born into a human family and the human family thus became an icon of God because of its interpersonal love and the fruitfulness of this love.

The 12-year-old Jesus stays behind in the Temple in Jerusalem unbeknown to His parents who, surprised and anxious, discover Him three days later conversing with the teachers. Jesus answers His Mother who asks for an explanation that He must "be in His Father's house" that is God's house (cf. Lk 2: 49). In this episode the boy Jesus appears to us full of zeal for God and for the Temple. Let us ask ourselves: from whom did Jesus learn love for His Father's affairs? As Son He certainly had an intimate knowledge of His Father, of God, and a profound and permanent relationship with Him but, in His own culture He had learned prayers and love for the Temple and for the Institutions of Israel from His parents. We may therefore say that Jesus' decision to stay on at the Temple was above all the result of His close relationship with the Father, but it was also a result of the education He had received from Mary and Joseph. Here we can glimpse the authentic meaning of Christian education: it is the fruit of a collaboration between educators and God that must always be sought. The Christian family is aware that children are a gift and a project of God. Therefore it cannot consider that it possesses them; rather, in serving God's plan through them, the family is called to educate them in the greatest freedom, which is precisely that of saying "yes" to God in order to do His will. The Virgin Mary is the perfect example of this "yes". Let us entrust all families to her, praying in particular for their precious educational mission.

Angelus 27 Dec 2009

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These texts from the speeches of Pope Benedict XVI have been edited from the originals to get them to a size suitable for meditation with the Rosary on First Saturdays.