



# The Holy See

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JOHN PAUL II

## **GENERAL AUDIENCE**

*Wednesday, 7 May 1997*

### ***Devotion to Mary is based on Jesus' will***

1. After entrusting John to Mary with the words "Woman, behold your son!", Jesus, from the Cross, turns to his beloved disciple, saying to him, "Behold, your mother!" (Jn 19:26-27). With these words, he reveals to Mary the height of her motherhood: as mother of the Saviour, she is also the mother of the redeemed, of all the members of the Mystical Body of her Son.

In silence the Virgin accepts the elevation to this highest degree of her motherhood of grace, having already given a response of faith with her "yes" at the Annunciation.

Jesus not only urges John to care for Mary with special love, but he entrusts her to him so that he may recognize her as his own mother.

During the Last Supper, "the disciple whom Jesus loved" listened to the Master's commandment: "Love one another as I have loved you" (Jn 15:12) and, leaning his head against the Lord's breast, he received from him a unique sign of love. Such experiences prepared him better to perceive in Jesus' words an invitation to accept her who had been given him as mother and to love her as Jesus did with filial affection.

May all discover in Jesus' words: "Behold, your mother!", the invitation to accept Mary as mother, responding to her motherly love as true children.

2. In the light of this entrustment to his beloved disciple, one can understand the authentic meaning of Marian devotion in the ecclesial community. In fact, it places Christians in Jesus' filial

relationship to his mother, putting them in a condition to grow in intimacy with both of them.

The Church's devotion to the Virgin is not only the fruit of a spontaneous response to the exceptional value of her person and the importance of her role in the work of salvation, but is based on Christ's will.

The words "Behold, your mother!", express Jesus' intention to inspire in his disciples an attitude of love for and trust in Mary, leading them to recognize her as their mother, the mother of every believer.

At the school of the Virgin, the disciples learn to know the Lord deeply, as John did, and to have an intimate and lasting relationship of love with him. They also discover the joy of entrusting themselves to the Mother's maternal love, living like affectionate and docile children.

The history of Christian piety teaches that Mary is the way which leads to Christ and that filial devotion to her takes nothing from intimacy with Jesus; indeed, it increases it and leads to the highest levels of perfection.

The countless Marian shrines throughout the world testify to the marvels wrought by grace through the intercession of Mary, Mother of the Lord and our Mother.

Turning to her, drawn by her tenderness, the men and women of our time also meet Jesus, Saviour and Lord of their lives.

Above all, the poor, tried in heart, in their affections and in their material need, find refuge and peace in the Mother of God, and discover that for all people true riches consist in the grace of conversion and of following Christ.

3. According to the original Greek, the Gospel text continues: "From that hour the disciple took her among his possessions" (Jn 19:27), thus stressing John's ready and generous adherence to Jesus' words and informing us about his behaviour for the whole of his life as the faithful guardian and docile son of the Virgin.

The hour of acceptance is that of the fulfilment of the work of salvation. Mary's spiritual motherhood and the first manifestation of the new link between her and the Lord's disciples begins precisely in this context.

John took the Mother "among his possessions". These rather general words seem to highlight his initiative, full of respect and love, not only in taking Mary to his house but also in living his spiritual life in communion with her.

In fact, a literal translation of the Greek expression “among his possessions” does not so much refer to material possessions since John — as St Augustine observes (*In Ioan. Evang. tract.* 119, 3) — “possessed nothing of his own”, but rather to the spiritual goods or gifts received from Christ: grace (Jn 1:16), the Word (Jn 12:48; 17:8), the spirit (Jn 7:39; 14:17), the Eucharist (Jn 6:32-58)... Among these gifts which come to him from the fact that he is loved by Jesus, the disciple accepts Mary as his mother, establishing a profound communion of life with her (cf. *Redemptoris Mater*, n. 45, note 130).

May every Christian, after the beloved disciple’s example, “take Mary into his house” and make room for her in his own daily life, recognizing her providential role in the journey of salvation.

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*To the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors the Holy Father said:*

I extend a warm welcome to all the English-speaking visitors, especially the pilgrims from England, Indonesia, Japan and the United States. Upon you and your families I cordially invoke the joy and peace of Jesus Christ our Saviour.

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