



# The Holy See

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POPE JOHN PAUL II

**GENERAL AUDIENCE**

*Wednesday, 12 March 1997*

## ***Mary had role in Jesus' public ministry***

1. After recalling Mary's intervention at the wedding feast of Cana, the Second Vatican Council emphasizes her participation in the public life of Jesus: "In the course of her Son's preaching she received the words whereby, in extolling a kingdom beyond the concerns and ties of flesh and blood, he declared blessed those who heard and kept the word of God (cf. Mk 3:35 par.; Lk 11:27-28) as she was faithfully doing (cf. Lk 2:19, 51)" (*Lumen gentium*, n. 58).

The beginning of Jesus' mission also meant separation from his Mother, who did not always follow her son in his travels on the roads of Palestine. Jesus deliberately chose separation from his Mother and from family affection, as can be inferred from the conditions he gave his disciples for following him and for dedicating themselves to proclaiming God's kingdom.

Nevertheless, Mary sometimes heard her Son's preaching. We can assume that she was present in the synagogue of Nazareth when Jesus, after reading Isaiah's prophecy, commented on the text and applied it to himself (cf. Lk 4:18-30). How much she must have suffered on that occasion, after sharing the general amazement at "the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth" (Lk 4:22), as she observed the harsh hostility of her fellow citizens who drove Jesus from the synagogue and even tried to kill him! The drama of that moment is evident in the words of the Evangelist Luke: "They rose up and put him out of the city, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw him down headlong. But passing through the midst of them he went away" (4:29-30).

Realizing after this event that there would be other trials, Mary confirmed and deepened her total

obedience to the Father's will, offering him her suffering as a mother and her loneliness.

2. According to the Gospels, Mary had the opportunity to hear her Son on other occasions as well. First at Capernaum, where Jesus went after the wedding feast of Cana, "with his mother and his brethren and his disciples" (Jn 2:12). For the Passover, moreover, she was probably able to follow him to the temple in Jerusalem, which Jesus called his Father's house and for which he was consumed with zeal (cf. Jn 2:16-17). Finding herself later among the crowd and not being able to approach Jesus, she hears him replying to those who had told him that she and their relatives had arrived: "My mother and my brethren are those who hear the word of God and do it" (Lk 8:21).

With these words, Christ, although relativizing family ties, is addressing great praise to his Mother by affirming a far loftier bond with her. Indeed, in listening to her Son, Mary accepts all his words and faithfully puts them into practice.

We can imagine that, although she did not follow Jesus on his missionary journey, she was informed of her Son's apostolic activities, lovingly and anxiously receiving news of his preaching from the lips of those who had met him.

Separation did not mean distance of heart, nor did it prevent the Mother from spiritually following her Son, from keeping and meditating on his teaching as she had done during Jesus' hidden life in Nazareth. Her faith in fact enabled her to grasp the meaning of Jesus' words before and better than his disciples, who often did not understand his teaching, especially the references to his future Passion (cf. Mt 16:21-23; Mk 9:32; Lk 9:45).

3. Following the events in her Son's life, Mary shared in his drama of experiencing rejection from some of the chosen people. This rejection first appeared during his visit to Nazareth and became more and more obvious in the words and attitudes of the leaders of the people.

In this way the Blessed Virgin would often have come to know the criticism, insults and threats directed at Jesus. In Nazareth too she would have frequently been troubled by the disbelief of relatives and acquaintances who would try to use Jesus (cf. Jn 7:2-5) or to stop his mission (Mk 3:21).

Through this suffering borne with great dignity and hiddenness, Mary shares the journey of her Son "to Jerusalem" (Lk 9:51) and, more and more closely united with him in faith, hope and love, she co-operates in salvation.

4. The Blessed Virgin thus becomes a model for those who accept Christ's words. Believing in the divine message since the Annunciation and fully supporting the Person of the Son, she teaches us to listen to the Saviour with trust, to discover in him the divine Word who transforms and renews our life. Her experience also encourages us to accept the trials and suffering that come from

fidelity to Christ, keeping our gaze fixed on the happiness Jesus promised those who listen to him and keep his word.

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

I wish to greet the English-speaking visitors, especially the pilgrim groups from Ireland, Sri Lanka, Canada and the United States. Upon all of you I cordially invoke the joy and peace of Jesus Christ our Saviour.

*The Holy Father also greeted the Ecumenical Commission of the Diocese of Stockholm, Sweden:*

I warmly welcome the Ecumenical Commission of the Diocese of Stockholm. With fond memories of my visit to Sweden, I encourage you to persevere in your work for the unity of all Christians in your country.

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