



The Holy See

**REFLECTION OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
ON THE SOLEMNITY OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION
OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY**

Piazza di Spagna, 8 December 2000

1. Today, 8 December, Romans have once again made a devout pilgrimage to this historic Piazza di Spagna, where in 1856 Bl. Pius IX wanted to erect this Marian monument to recall the promulgation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception.

We pay homage to Mary Most Holy, preserved from the contagion of original sin and from any other hint of sin from the very first moment, in virtue of the merits of her Son, Jesus Christ, our only Redeemer.

As I do every year, I willingly join in the offering of this traditional floral tribute, an eloquent symbol of unanimous entrustment to the Immaculate Heart of the Lord's Mother.

2. In the context of the Great Jubilee, the truth of faith which the Church professes and proclaims today resounds with exceptional clarity: *"I will put enmity between you and the woman,*

*and between your seed and her seed;
he shall bruise your head" (Gn 3: 15).*

Prophetic words of hope,
echoing since the dawn of history!
They foretell the victory that Jesus,
"born of woman" (Gal 4: 4),
would win over Satan, the prince of this world.

"He shall bruise your head": the Son's victory
is the Mother's victory, the victory
of the Immaculate Servant of the Lord,
who intercedes for us as advocate of mercy.
This is the mystery we celebrate today;
this is the proclamation we renew with faith
at the foot of this Marian column.

Rome, cradle of history and civilization,
chosen by God as the see of Peter
and his successors, land sanctified
by numerous martyrs and witnesses of the faith,
opens her arms this day to the entire world.

Rome, centre of the Catholic faith,
speaks on behalf of the Christian people
scattered across the five continents
and proclaims with joyful faith:
in you, Mary, Love has triumphed.

3. *"I will put enmity between you
and the woman..."*. Do not these
mysterious words from the Book of Genesis
sum up the dramatic truth of all human history?
At the end of its work 35 years ago,
the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council recalled
that history, in its deepest reality,
is the scene of "an arduous struggle
against the powers of darkness, which started
at the world's beginning and will continue,
as the Lord tells us, until the last day"
(*Gaudium et spes*, n. 37).

This relentless conflict involves man,
every human being, who "has to struggle
continuously to be allied with what is good,
and only with great effort and the help of God's
grace can he achieve his own inner unity" (ibid.).

4. Immaculate Virgin, Mother of the Saviour,
the ages tell of your motherly presence
supporting the pilgrim people on the paths
of history. To you we raise our eyes and
ask you to sustain us in the struggle against evil
and in the effort to do good. Keep us under your
motherly protection, Virgin all fair and all holy!
Help us go forward into the new millennium
clothed with that humility which made you
beloved above all in the sight of the Most High.

May the fruits of this Jubilee Year not be wasted!
In your hands we place the future that awaits us,
invoking your constant protection on the whole
world. Therefore, like the Apostle John,
we want to take you into our home (cf. *Jn* 19: 27).

Stay with us, Mary, stay with us always!
Ora pro nobis, intercede pro nobis,
ad Dominum Iesum Christum!

Amen.

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