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Pope: Pain Endured With Faith Leads to Peace

Releases Message for World Day of the Sick

VATICAN CITY, JAN. 22, 2008 (Zenit.org).- Pain is the door by which the faithful can enter into the mystery of redemption, and reach with Christ peace and happiness, says Benedict XVI.

The Pope said this in his message for the 16th World Day of the Sick, to be celebrated on the diocesan level Feb. 11, which has as its theme "The Eucharist, Lourdes and Pastoral Care for the Sick"

The Holy Father said the theme connects three events of the Church -- the World Day of the Sick, the 150th anniversary of the Marian apparitions at Lourdes, and the celebration of the International Eucharistic Congress, to be held Jun 15-22 in Quebec City.

By contemplating the mystery of the Eucharist in connection with the World Day of the Sick, said the Pontiff, "not only will the actual participation of human suffering in the salvific work of God be celebrated, but the valuable fruits promised to those who believe can in a certain sense be enjoyed."

"Thus pain," he added, "received with faith, becomes the door by which to enter the mystery of the redemptive suffering of Jesus and to reach with him the peace and the happiness of his resurrection."

He also said that reflecting on the three events is "a remarkable opportunity to consider the close connection that exists between the mystery of the Eucharist, the role of Mary in the project of salvation and the reality of human pain and suffering."

Fiat

"Mary is a model of total self-abandonment to the will of God," he said. "To reflect upon the Immaculate Conception of Mary is thus to allow oneself to be attracted by the 'yes' that joined her wonderfully to the mission of Christ, the redeemer of humanity.

"It is to allow oneself to be taken and led by her hand to pronounce in one's turn 'fiat' to the will of God, with all one's existence interwoven with joys and sadness, hopes and disappointments, in the awareness that tribulations, pain and suffering make rich the meaning of our pilgrimage on earth."

"One cannot contemplate Mary without being attracted by Christ," continued Benedict XVI, "and one cannot look at Christ without immediately perceiving the presence of Mary. There is an indissoluble link between the Mother and the Son, generated in her womb by work of the Holy Spirit, and this link we perceive, in a mysterious way, in the sacrament of the Eucharist."

Mary is a "woman of the Eucharist," noted the Pope, explaining that this why at Lourdes the devotion to the Virgin Mother "is joined to a strong and constant reference" to the sacrament. The Pontiff continued: "The presence of many sick pilgrims in Lourdes, and of the volunteers who accompany them, helps us to reflect on the maternal and tender care that the Virgin expresses toward human pain and suffering."

"Mary suffers with those who are in affliction, with them she hopes, and she is their comfort, supporting them with her maternal help."

Gift

Speaking of the International Eucharistic Congress in Canada, the Holy Father said the event "will be an opportunity to worship Jesus Christ present in the sacrament of the altar, to entrust ourselves to him as hope that does not disappoint, to receive him as that medicine of immortality which heals the body and the spirit."

He said the theme of the congress -- "The Eucharist, Gift of God for the Life of the World" -- emphasizes how the Eucharist is the gift that the Father makes to the world of His only Son, incarnated and crucified."

Benedict XVI continued: "It is specifically from the Eucharist that pastoral care in health must draw the necessary spiritual strength to come effectively to man's aid and to help him to understand the salvific value of his own suffering."

"Mysteriously united to Christ, the man who suffers with love and meek self-abandonment to the will of God becomes a living offering for the salvation of the world."