

# FAITH AND REASON

In honor of the Blessed Virgin, on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, 8 December, the Holy Father placed flowers at the foot of the monument to Our Lady in Rome's Piazza di Spagna, for the traditional Act of Veneration, where he also recited a prayer. Entrusting the needs of the world to Our Lady, when he spoke of the suffering Ukrainian people, the Holy Father was overcome with emotion and had to pause several times. The following is a translation of the Pope's prayer.

Our Immaculate Mother, today the people of Rome gather around you. The flowers, laid at your feet from so many urban realities, express their love and devotion for you who watch over us all. And you also see and welcome those invisible flowers that are so many invocations, so many silent supplications, sometimes stifled, hidden, but not from you, who are Mother. After two years in which I came alone to pay homage to you at the dawning of the day, today I return to you together with the people of this Church and this City. And I bring you the thanks and supplications of all your children, near and far. From Heaven where God has welcomed you, you see earthly things far better than we do; but as Mother you listen to our invocations to present them to your Son, to His Heart full of mercy. First of all, I bring you the filial love of countless men and women, not only Christians, who nourish for you the greatest gratitude for your beauty, full of grace and humility: for in the midst of so many dark clouds you are a sign of hope and consolation.

I bring you the smiles of the children, who learn your name before one of your images, in the arms of their mothers and grandmothers, and who begin to know that they also have a Mother in Heaven. And when it happens in life that those smiles give way to tears, how important it is to have known you, to have had the gift of your motherhood!

I bring you the gratitude of the elderly and the old: a thanks expressed with their lives, woven of memories, of joys and sorrows, of achievements that they are well aware have been achieved with your help, holding their hands in yours.

Mother, I bring you the worries of families, of fathers and mothers who often struggle to make ends meet at home, and, day by day, face small and large challenges to get by. In particular, I entrust to you the young couples who, looking to you and to Saint Joseph, go forward courageously in life trusting in God's Providence.

I bring you the dreams and anxieties of young people, open to the future but held back by a culture rich in things and poor in values, saturated with information and lacking in education, persuasive in misleading and ruthless in disappointing. I especially commend to you the boys and girls who have been most affected by the pandemic, that little by little they may resume spreading and flapping their wings and rediscover the enjoyment of flying high.

Immaculate Virgin, I would have liked to have brought to you today the thanksgiving of the Ukrainian people for the peace we have long been asking the Lord for. Instead, I still have to present to you the supplication of the children, of the elderly, of the fathers and mothers, of the young people of that martyred land. But in reality we all know that you are with them and with all who are suffering, just as you were beside the cross of your Son.

Thank you, our Mother! Looking to you who are without sin, may we continue to believe and hope that love may conquer hatred, that truth may conquer lies, that pardon may conquer offences, that peace may conquer war. So be it!

**Mary is a woman who loves.** How could it be otherwise? As a believer who in faith thinks with God's thoughts and wills with God's will, she cannot fail to be a woman who loves. We sense this in her quiet gestures, as recounted by the infancy narratives in the Gospel. We see it in the delicacy with which she recognizes the need of the spouses at Cana and makes it known to Jesus. We see it in the humility with which she recedes into the background during Jesus' public life, knowing that the Son must establish a new family and that the Mother's hour will come only with the Cross, which will be Jesus' true hour (cf. Jn 2:4; 13:1). When the disciples flee, Mary will remain beneath the Cross (cf. Jn 19:25-27); later, at the hour of Pentecost, it will be they who gather around her as they wait for the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 1:14). Pope Benedict XVI, God Is Love: Deus Caritas Est

**Your Love:** Lord put your love between my shoulder and my cross to help me bare the weight. Lord put your love between my heart and my suffering to take some of the pain. Lord put your love between my eyes and your cross that I may not lose its sight. Lord put your love between my tongue and my enemy to remove its sting. Lord put your love between my mouth and my soul that I may forever your praises sing. Lord put your love in my hand, that I may use it to help my fellow man. Lord put your love in my soul that I might enlighten the world.

**In this valley of tears**, every man is born to weep, and all must suffer, by enduring the evils that take place every day. But how much greater would be the misery of life, if we also knew the future evils that await us! 'Unfortunate, indeed, would be the situation of someone who knows the future', says the pagan Roman philosopher Seneca; 'he would have to suffer everything by anticipation'. Our Lord shows us this mercy. He conceals the trials that await us so that, whatever they may be, we may endure them only once. But he didn't show Mary this compassion. God willed her to be the Queen of Sorrows, and in all things like his Son. So, she always had to see before her eyes, and continually to suffer, all the torments that awaited her. And these were the sufferings of the passion and death of her beloved Jesus. For in the temple, St. Simeon, having received the divine Child in his arms, foretold to her that her Son would be a sign for all the persecutions and oppositions of men, Jesus our King and his most holy mother didn't refuse, for love of us, to suffer such cruel pains throughout their lives. So it's reasonable that we, at least, should not complain if we have to suffer something.... **St. Alphonsus Liguori**

**Month of the Holy Name of Jesus: Devotion of the Month:** The month of January is traditionally dedicated to the Holy Name of Jesus. After the Blessed Virgin Mary conceived by the Holy Spirit, the angel Gabriel appeared to St. Joseph and told him that the Child's name should be called Jesus, meaning "God Saves." According to Jewish law, on the 8th day after his birth a male child was to be circumcised, receive his name, and become a full member of God's covenant people. According to the old Roman liturgical calendar, the Feast of the Circumcision of Jesus was celebrated on January 1st, eight days after Christmas, the same day that He was given His sacred name. Currently we celebrate the Solemnity of the Mother of God on January 1st and honor the Holy Name of Jesus on January 3rd. For Catholics, Jesus' sacred name is the object of a special devotion symbolized by the monogram "IHS," (sometimes called a Christogram), which is the first three letters of the Greek spelling of His name.

#### **A Thought For the Day**

<b>Sunday</b>	God speaks in the silence of the heart. Listening is the beginning of prayer.
<b>Monday</b>	Don't believe everything you think.
<b>Tuesday</b>	Faith gives substance to our hopes and makes us certain of realities we do not see.
<b>Wednesday</b>	God places the heaviest burden on those who can carry its weight.
<b>Thursday</b>	There is nobility in compassion, a beauty in empathy, a grace in forgiveness.
<b>Friday</b>	Hate. It has caused a lot of problems in this world, but it has not solved one yet.
<b>Saturday</b>	Grace is not part of consciousness; it is the amount of light in our souls, not knowledge nor reason.

**Let anger be guarded against.** But if it cannot be averted, let it be kept within bounds. For indignation is a terrible incentive to sin. It disorders the mind to such an extent as to leave no room for reason. The first thing, therefore, to aim at, if possible, is to make tranquility of character our natural disposition by constant practice, by desire for better things, by fixed determination...**St. Ambrose**

I was sure that it was better for me to give myself up to your love than to give in to my own desires. However, although the one way appealed to me and was gaining mastery, the other still afforded me pleasure and kept me victim. I had no answer to give to you when you said to me, 'Rise, you who sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ will enlighten you.' When on all sides you showed me that your words were true, and I was overcome by your truth, I had no answer whatsoever to make, but only those slow and drowsy words, 'Right away. Yes, right away.' 'Let me be for a little while.' But 'Right away—right away' was never right now, and 'Let me be for a little while' stretched out for a long time... **St. Augustine**

#### **In His Will is Our Peace**

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