

REFLECTIONS ON POPE BENEDICT XVI'S MONTHLY INTENTIONS May 2008

Editor's Note: Apostleship of Prayer receives monthly prayer intentions from Pope Benedict XVI and urges Christians throughout the world to unite in prayer for those intentions. The reflections below seek to illuminate the Holy Father's concerns.

General Intention

Human Dignity. *That Christians may use literature, art, and mass media to create a culture which defends and promotes the values of the human person.*



This month Pope Benedict XVI asks us to pray for those whose handiwork fills the media. We pray that artists of all kinds will create works that promote the dignity of the human person. The Pope urges artists and media executives to represent people as we are, creatures made in God's image. In his 2008 Message for World Communications Day, he said, "Man thirsts for truth." We know this is true because many works of art owe their success to the fact that they present the "truth, beauty, or greatness of the person, including the religious dimension."

Christian artists are called not to reject, but to redeem ungodly culture - as indeed they have been doing for twenty centuries. The history of western civilization is studded like the night sky with Christian works of art, greater and lesser stars by which we still steer. When the novelist Dostoevsky said "Beauty will save the world," he meant that true beauty in nature or in art is a revelation of God that evokes the response of faith.

Barbara Nicolosi, Hollywood writer and teacher, asks Christians to stop complaining about immorality in the media and get busy ourselves making programs that are both morally and artistically good. "Our efforts to make film and television in a 'safe' Christian envelope will not be blessed," says Nicolosi. "We need to be in the middle of the industry, on the lots, on the sets, and in the network and studio offices, working side by side with those who do not share our worldview, so as to bring God where he is not."

Whatever our circumstances, isn't that the evangelization we are all called to? The beauty of God should so shine through us that people we encounter will know they are infinitely lovable, infinitely valuable. We can do this with arts and the media, we can do this with our service, and we can also do it by our prayers.



Let us pray that the beauty of God goes out into the whole world through the arts and mass media, drawing many into close friendship with Jesus Christ.

Reflection:

How do you affirm the dignity, beauty, and value of human beings in the things you do?

Scripture:

John 14:6: *Jesus said to him, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except by me."*

Mission Intention

Mary's Guidance. *That the Virgin Mary, Star of Evangelization and Queen of the Apostles, may still guide missionaries with maternal affection, just as she accompanied the Apostles in the early stages of the Church.*



Mary took part in the first novena. From the Ascension until Pentecost - nine days - Mary and the apostles prayed. It was natural for her to join the apostles as they waited in obedient prayer. She was like a mother to them. Jesus had already asked St. John to take her into his home as his own mother. She was there when the Holy Spirit fell on them. They received the power Jesus promised them to go out and proclaim salvation to the ends of the earth.

Recognizing that Mary supported the apostles by her motherly love and prayers, Benedict XVI asks us to pray that she may still accompany missionaries. She remains a model of virtue, wisdom, and love.

She also shows us the role of prayer in evangelization. People are not converted except by the Holy Spirit. So the best way to support missionaries is to pray that the Holy Spirit will convert people to believe in Jesus and come into the Church. Ideally, missionaries, indispensable to evangelization, become vehicles of the grace of God, just like Mary.

Prayer for missionaries lies at the origin of the Apostleship of Prayer. In 1844 a group of Jesuit seminarians complained to their spiritual director about having to wait to be missionaries. Fr. Francis Gautrelet told them: "Be apostles now, apostles of prayer! Offer everything you are doing each day in union with the Heart of our Lord for what He wishes, the spread of the Kingdom for the salvation of souls."

You and I are privileged to serve the world and the Church, to join in prayer with Mary, our Mother, and the Mother of the Church. This is the heart of our daily offering.



Reflection:

How does your daily offering work to bring the Holy Spirit into the lives of others?

Scripture:

Acts 1:4, 8, 14 *He enjoined them...to wait for "the promise of the Father about which you have heard me speak...You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem...and to the ends of the earth."... All these devoted themselves with one accord to prayer, together with some women, and Mary the mother of Jesus.*

Prayer of the Month



*O Mary,
Star of the New Evangelization,
make us the light of the world.
We receive Christ in the Eucharist;
help us to build His Kingdom in the world.*

*Teach us to do whatever He tells us.
May our study of His life lead us to love Him and our love for Him lead
us to imitate Him.*

*If we are what we should be,
we will set the world ablaze.
We ask your intercession to make this so, through Christ our Lord,
Amen.*

--From the Collegium Center for Faith and Culture

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