



# Mary's Notebook

February-March 2008

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## The Acies

The Tidewater Curia will hold Acies on March 16th at 3:00pm at St. Matthew Catholic Church. The proceedings commence with a hymn, followed by the opening prayers of the Legion including the Rosary. An address by a priest on the significance of the consecration to Our Lady follows. [CC p.2]

## Holy See Affirms Trinity

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith affirmed that for a person to be baptized the person must be baptized in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. This clarifies questions and concerns relating to attempts by some to baptize without invoking the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. [CC p.2]

## Can We Be Saints?

In the heart of every right-thinking Catholic, God has implanted the desire to become a Saint. Yet few make a serious attempt to realize the ambition. The cause for this is to a large extent discouragement, due to the misunderstanding of what a Saint really is... a Saint is... One who, with the object of pleasing God, does his ordinary duties extraordinarily well. Such a life may be lived out without a single wonder in it, arouse little notice, be soon forgotten, and yet be the life of one of God's dearest friends... [CC. p.8]

## Divine Mysteries: Prayer for Vocations

*MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE BENEDICT XVI FOR THE 45th WORLD DAY OF PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS - Theme: "Vocations at the service of the Church on mission"*

Dear brothers and sisters,

1. For the World Day of Prayer for Vocations, to be celebrated on 13 April 2008, I have chosen the theme: Vocations at the service of the Church on mission. The Risen Jesus gave to the Apostles this command: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Mt 28:19), assuring them: "I am with you always, to the close of the age" (Mt 28: 20). The Church is missionary in herself and in each one of her members. [Cont. p.5]

# News and Events

## The Acies

Then the procession towards the statue begins. The Spiritual Directors go first in single file. Then the legionaries, also singly, except in the case of great numbers when they may advance in pairs. On reaching the vexillum, each one (or each pair) pauses; then, placing the hand upon the staff of the vexillum, he repeats vocally, as an individual act of consecration, the following words: "I am all yours, my Queen, my Mother, and all that I have is yours." This done, the vexillum is relinquished, the legionary bows slightly and passes on.

When all legionaries have resumed their places, an act of consecration to Our Lady is said aloud by the priest on behalf of all present. Following this, the Catena is recited, all present standing. Then follows, if at all possible, Benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament; after which the concluding prayers of the Legion are recited, a hymn is sung, and the Acies terminates.

The above formula of consecration: "I am all yours, etc." should not be mechanically or thoughtlessly pronounced. Each one should compress into it the fullest degree of understanding and gratitude. As a help towards this, he should study A Marian Synthesis, appendix 11. Perhaps the Synthesis could be made the subject of the spiritual reading and of the Allocutio at a praesidium meeting shortly before the Acies.

## Please Pray For:

Ed McIntosh is undergoing experimental chemotherapy for thyroid cancer. Ed is a former Arlington Regia officer, and has been a legionary for over 20 years.

Mary Beth Balint, will have surgery March 5 to repair a severely herniated disc. Mary Beth is an auxiliary member of the Legion.

Brother Ron Lemnah, president Alexandria Curia, is hospitalized in Fairfax Hospital with an irregular heart beat.

## The Baptismal Formulae

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith answered two questions concerning the validity of Baptism conferred with certain non-standard formulae.

The first question is: "Is a Baptism valid if conferred with the words 'I baptise you in the name of the Creator, and of the Redeemer, and of the Sanctifier', or 'I baptise you in the name of the Creator, and of the Liberator, and of the Sustainer'?" The Answer given was "negative"

The second question is: "Must people baptised with those formulae be baptised 'in forma absoluta'?" The Answer given was "affirmative".

# Handbook Study

## Immaculate Conception and the Legion

The Legion is steeped in the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception. It is not simply a doctrine that we assent to with our mind or accept with our heart. It is a doctrine that the Legion translates into habitual action. It is the dynamic principle of its apostolic action or the soul of its apostolate. The Dogma of the Immaculate Conception is a radical and all pervasive dimension of the inner life of our Founder, the Servant of God Frank: Duff. If the Handbook of the Legion is in many ways the spiritual autobiography of Frank Duff, then we can see so clearly the striking place that this Marian Dogma plays in his life and that of the Legion.

The Handbook tells us: 'At the very first meeting, the members prayed and deliberated round a little altar of the Immaculate Conception identical with that which now forms the center of every Legion meeting.

Moreover, the very first breath of the Legion may be said to have been drawn in an ejaculation in honor of this privilege of Our Lady, which formed the preparation for all the dignities



and all the privileges afterwards accorded to her.' So from the very beginning wherever and whenever legionaries meet together they look to Mary Immaculate.

For Frank: Duff the Immaculate Conception is above all a person. He loved her and with his whole mind and heart, indeed with his whole being he was consecrated to her as the Woman of Genesis, the New Eve, the Mother of God, the Mother of his very soul given to him by God, the Mother of Divine Grace and the Mediatrix of all graces. And the text of scripture that he seems to put before legionaries, as the best entrance to the spirit of the Legion, is the text from Genesis: 'I will put enmities between you and the woman, and thy seed and her seed; She shall crush thy head and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel.' Frank preferred this interpretation of the Vulgate perhaps because it is the one used by Pope Pius



IX in the Bull defining the Immaculate Conception, it is also the interpretation preferred by many of the Fathers of the Church, Cardinal Newman one of his favorite authors defends this translation and of course it is the interpretation followed by St. Louis Marie de Montfort.

If there had been even the slightest moral fault in Mary and even if it was only for a split second, then for that brief moment she would have not been at enmity with Satan but subject to him. This would be unthinkable in the Mother of God. So she was indeed created Mary Immaculate. It was not just freedom from sin but total opposition to sin in her very identity and from the first moment of her existence. As legionaries of Mary, we wish to share her total abhorrence of sin. Nothing destroys the human person as profoundly as sin and that is one of the reasons we join in the warfare against it in ourselves and in wherever we find it.

But the Immaculate Conception is not only about freedom from the least shadow of sin, it is also about the fullness of grace in Mary. She is given all the grace she needs to be the worthy Mother of God and the Mother of every human person. She proclaims by her very being the primacy of grace in the plan of God. Grace has the last word over sin. This victory over sin comes through Mary. God has chosen her to be the instrument of all the graces merited by the passion and death of Our Lord. The legionary is called to be an instrument of grace in our world with Mary, through Mary and in total dependence on Mary. We are not simply in the business of seeking out evil and condemning it. Our primary role is to be apostles of grace. The joy of the Gospel must be our identifying trademark. We must proclaim in our lives and in the gentleness of our words that victory comes through Mary, that there is well-founded hope even in the worst possible situations. In other words we must embody the spirit of the Immaculate Conception.

That is at the heart of our devotion to the Miraculous Medal that indispensable sacramental of our Legion Apostolate. When we distribute the Miraculous Medal it would be sad if we did not explain the meaning of the Medal. If we neglect to present the extraordinary riches of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, we would be depriving others of an immense hope and the good news that with Mary they can overcome every obstacle to union with Our Lord and with each other in Him.

Finally, we know that no one has ever been more deeply aware that they have been redeemed by the redemptive suffering of Jesus than Mary. So her whole life is a Magnificat of thanksgiving and of praising the mercy of God. That is why she loves to call herself the Immaculate Conception because it points to Jesus and his redemptive love, not only for her, but for all mankind. We too, together with Mary, must proclaim the Immaculate Conception. We too as legionaries must be channels of God's Mercy in union with her. The Legion began as 'The Association of Our Lady of Mercy' and although the Legion did not wish to be identified with only one particular title of Mary but desired to be immersed with everything associated with Mary, it must never forget that mercy must always be one of the most beautiful characteristics of the legionary soul and its apostolate.

*Concilium Allocutio December 2007  
By Fr. Bede McGregor O.P.  
Spiritual Director to the Legion of Mary*

# Divine Mysteries

## *Prayer For Vocations*

[CC. p.1]

Through the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation, every Christian is called to bear witness and to announce the Gospel, but this missionary dimension is associated in a special and intimate way with the priestly vocation. In the covenant with Israel, God entrusted to certain men, called by him and sent to the people in his name, a mission as prophets and priests. He did so, for example, with Moses: “Come, - God told him - I will send you to Pharaoh, that you may bring forth my people ... out of Egypt ... when you have brought forth the people out of Egypt, you will serve God upon this mountain” (Ex 3: 10 and 12). The same happened with the prophets.

2. The promises made to our fathers were fulfilled entirely in Jesus Christ. In this regard, the Second Vatican Council says: “The Son, therefore, came, sent by the Father. It was in him, before the foundation of the world, that the Father chose us and predestined us to become adopted sons ... To carry out the will of the Father, Christ inaugurated the kingdom of heaven on earth and revealed to us the mystery of that kingdom. By his obedience he brought about redemption” (Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, 3). And Jesus already in his public life, while preaching in Galilee, chose some disciples to be his close collaborators in the messianic ministry. For example, on the occasion of the multiplication of the loaves, he said to the Apostles: “You give them something to eat” (Mt 14: 16), encouraging them to assume the needs of the crowds to whom he wished to offer nourishment, but also to reveal the food “which endures to eternal life” (Jn 6: 27). He

was moved to compassion for the people, because while visiting cities and villages, he found the crowds weary and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd (cf. Mt 9: 36). From this gaze of love came the invitation to his disciples: “Pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest” (Mt 9: 38), and he sent the Twelve initially “to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” with precise instructions. If we pause to meditate on this passage of Matthew’s Gospel, commonly called the “missionary discourse”, we may take note of those aspects which distinguish the missionary activity of a Christian community, eager to remain faithful to the example and teaching of Jesus. To respond to the Lord’s call means facing in prudence and simplicity every danger and even persecutions, since “a disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master” (Mt 10: 24). Having become one with their Master, the disciples are no longer alone as they announce the Kingdom of heaven; Jesus himself is acting in them: “He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives him who sent me” (Mt 10: 40). Furthermore, as true witnesses, “clothed with power from on high” (Lk 24: 49), they preach “repentance and the forgiveness of sins” (Lk 24: 47) to all peoples.

3. Precisely because they have been sent by the Lord, the Twelve are called “Apostles”, destined to walk the roads of the world announcing the Gospel as witnesses to the death and resurrection of Christ. Saint Paul, writing to the Christians of Corinth, says: “We – the Apostles – preach Christ crucified” (1 Cor 1: 23). The Book of the Acts of the

Apostles also assigns a very important role in this task of evangelization to other disciples whose missionary vocation arises from providential, sometimes painful, circumstances such as expulsion from their own lands for being followers of Jesus (cf. 8,1-4). The Holy Spirit transforms this trial into an occasion of grace, using it so that the name of the Lord can be preached to other peoples, stretching in this way the horizons of the Christian community. These are men and women who, as Luke writes in the Acts of the Apostles, “have risked their lives for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ” (15: 26). First among them is undoubtedly Paul of Tarsus, called by the Lord himself, hence a true Apostle. The story of Paul, the greatest missionary of all times, brings out in many ways the link between vocation and mission. Accused by his opponents of not being authorized for the apostolate, he makes repeated appeals precisely to the call which he received directly from the Lord (cf. Rom 1: 1; Gal 1: 11-12 and 15-17).

4. In the beginning, and thereafter, what “impels” the Apostles (cf. 2 Cor 5: 14) is always “the love of Christ”. Innumerable missionaries, throughout the centuries, as faithful servants of the Church, docile to the action of the Holy Spirit, have followed in the footsteps of the first disciples. The Second Vatican Council notes: “Although every disciple of Christ, as far in him lies, has the duty of spreading the faith, Christ the Lord always calls whomever he will from among the number of his disciples, to be with him and to be sent by him to preach to the nations [cf. Mk 3: 13-15]” (Decree Ad Gentes, 23). In fact, the love of Christ must be communicated to the brothers by example and words, with all one’s life. My venerable predecessor John Paul II wrote: “The special vocation of

missionaries ‘for life’ retains all its validity: it is the model of the Church's missionary commitment, which always stands in need of radical and total self-giving, of new and bold endeavours”. (Encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*, 66)

5. Among those totally dedicated to the service of the Gospel, are priests, called to preach the word of God, administer the sacraments, especially the Eucharist and Reconciliation, committed to helping the lowly, the sick, the suffering, the poor, and those who experience hardship in areas of the world where there are, at times, many who still have not had a real encounter with Jesus Christ. Missionaries announce for the first time to these people Christ’s redemptive love. Statistics show that the number of baptized persons increases every year thanks to the pastoral work of these priests, who are wholly consecrated to the salvation of their brothers and sisters. In this context, a special word of thanks must be expressed “to the *fidei donum* priests who work faithfully and generously at building up the community by proclaiming the word of God and breaking the Bread of Life, devoting all their energy to serving the mission of the Church. Let us thank God for all the priests who have suffered even to the sacrifice of their lives in order to serve Christ ... Theirs is a moving witness that can inspire many young people to follow Christ and to expend their lives for others, and thus to discover true life” (Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis*, 26).

6. There have always been in the Church many men and women who, prompted by the action of the Holy Spirit, choose to live the Gospel in a radical way, professing the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience. This multitude of men and women religious,

belonging to innumerable Institutes of contemplative and active life, still plays “the main role in the evangelisation of the world” (Ad Gentes, 40). With their continual and community prayer, contemplatives intercede without ceasing for all humanity. Religious of the active life, with their many charitable activities, bring to all a living witness of the love and mercy of God. The Servant of God Paul VI concerning these apostles of our times said: “Thanks to their consecration they are eminently willing and free to leave everything and to go and proclaim the Gospel even to the ends of the earth. They are enterprising and their apostolate is often marked by an originality, by a genius that demands admiration. They are generous: often they are found at the outposts of the mission, and they take the greatest of risks for their health and their very lives. Truly the Church owes them much” (Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 69).

7. Furthermore, so that the Church may continue to fulfil the mission entrusted to her by Christ, and not lack promoters of the Gospel so badly needed by the world, Christian communities must never fail to provide both children and adults with constant education in the faith. It is necessary to keep alive in the faithful a committed sense of missionary responsibility and active solidarity with the peoples of the world. The gift of faith calls all Christians to co-operate in the work of evangelization. This awareness must be nourished by preaching and catechesis, by the liturgy, and by constant formation in prayer. It must grow through the practice of welcoming others, with charity and spiritual

companionship, through reflection and discernment, as well as pastoral planning, of which attention to vocations must be an integral part.

8. Vocations to the ministerial priesthood and to the consecrated life can only flourish in a spiritual soil that is well cultivated. Christian communities that live the missionary dimension of the mystery of the Church in a profound way will never be inward looking. Mission, as a witness of divine love, becomes particularly effective when it is shared in a community, “so that the world may believe” (cf. Jn 17: 21). The Church prays everyday to the Holy Spirit for the gift of vocations. Gathered around the Virgin Mary, Queen of the Apostles, as in the beginning, the ecclesial community learns from her how to implore the Lord for a flowering of new apostles, alive with the faith and love that are necessary for the mission.

9. While I entrust this reflection to all the ecclesial communities so that they may make it their own, and draw from it inspiration for prayer, and as I encourage those who are committed to work with faith and generosity in the service of vocations, I wholeheartedly send to educators, catechists and to all, particularly to young people on their vocational journey, a special Apostolic Blessing.

*From the Vatican, 3 December 2007*

BENEDICT XVI

# Legion Spirit

## THE DAY IN DETAIL

### The Foundation Stone

Foremost in the consideration of our day and on an eminence apart, like the Cross itself must stand the daily Mass and daily reception of the Holy Eucharist. These are so obviously the greatest means of Grace that they need not be urged at length. The person who is able easily to go to morning Mass, and does not do so, only deceives himself if he thinks he is aiming at great holiness.

Mass and Communion mean a day perfectly begun - and that is half the battle. But out of this great act come two smaller obligations: (a) to your neighbor. There are many whom lack of thought alone keeps from Daily Mass. Lend a book; say a word to awaken them; (b) to yourself; read to increase knowledge and reverence.

### The Morning Offering

The day should have opened with the morning offering of all our thoughts, words, and actions to Jesus through Mary. This offering must be the guiding idea of the whole day. We do not need to repeat the words many times, but the thought of it must lie in the heart, and govern our daily life in such a way that we feel ourselves to be working for God and not for the world.

### Our Daily Work

First, let no one pride himself on having what he considers a dignified occupation. In despising menial or manual labor, he is parting company with Christianity and allying himself to paganism, which in all ages has counted such work the greatest of all evils.

The ancient Jews, do the contrary, esteemed it a disgrace that any man should be without a trade. Generally our Lord's followers were from the humblest type of manual laborers, and the whole teaching of traditional Christianity has been to exalt manual work, and to teach that to be poor, to have to toil hard, to be without what the world regards as enviable, is in reality a long start on the way to heaven.

"To work is to pray," was the old saying of the Monks, who never considered themselves any the further from God when working than when on their knees. In some monasteries they sang hymns while at work; in others meditation was ordered. We read of St. Bernard stopping suddenly in the writing of one of his most wonderful sermons, because the time had arrived for him to go to dig in the fields. Others would have some pious book open before them to suggest holy thoughts, while their hands were engaged upon their allotted task; and more wonderful still, others never began their painting or tasks of delicate workmanship without purifying their souls by Sacramental Confession. It was this spirit of prayer and work combined which produced those



exquisite works of art, which present generations marvel at, but cannot equal. God, in His approval of work done in such a spirit, breathed beauty into it. Let us, if we desire to produce similar work, approach it in a similar way.

## The Importance of a Right Idea of Work

As half of our waking day is spent in toil, the need for rightly understanding the dignity and sanctity of labor is evident. It comes to this, that our work, whatever it may be, as seamstress, laborer, teacher, doctor or farmer was given to us by God as a means of sanctification and as a penance for our sins. Thus it is the foundation of our spiritual life. He who neglects his work and yet thinks, because he says many prayers, that he is leading a holy life, deludes himself.

## A Right Idea of Duty

We are to do what it is our duty to do - and at the right time. Duty is not something, which is to be thrown off with our working clothes, as so many people imagine. It is as strictly our duty to keep an appointment or a secret, as it is to do our work. A duty goes before even "Devotions." It is your duty to wash the dishes, do not run off to Benediction instead.

There are many duties in the day which seem less important than others, and for this reason we think very little of setting them aside to suit the convenience of the moment. Such conduct is wrong, and it does not build up a strong character. The real value of our day lies in the exact performance of all our obligations. The greater ones take care of themselves - their

importance makes them easy to do. So look particularly to the small things.

Consider your whole day as a picture where every line has its proper place. And where the smallest may be the most essential. Do everything that you are supposed to do, and do it down to the tiniest detail - not because somebody is supervising you, but simply because you are supposed to do it.

There is a proverb: "Death is light as a feather. Duty as heavy as lead," and a life lived in devotion to duty is going to be a hard life. But it is going to be the life of a Man.

Here is a lesson from the Far East. A Japanese craftsman was observed to be spending days in perfecting the inside of an article he was making. He was asked, "Why waste all this time? Nobody will ever see your work." He replied, "Do I not see it myself?" To this answer, may not we, as Christians add, "And God sees it, too."

## Praying at Our Work

We see that Work and Duty are holy things when the idea of God is in them. But, by themselves, they are not holy enough for those who are trying to be Saints. We must bring God closer to our work than by the mere offering of it in the morning. We must keep Him at our side by frequent thought of Him,

It is told by a Spanish Nun who had charge of the refectory that in order never to be distracted she imagined those she served to be Our Blessed Lord and His Mother and the Apostles. In this way her work became a great means of prayer to her, and the hours spent in

it were amongst the most devotional in the whole day.

While this may be above the reach of our poor minds, distracted by a thousand things, we may at least confidently seek after a quiet sense of God's Presence. This does not mean that we have actually to feel Him near us. If we have by the regular practice of prayer and frequent thought of Him, so drilled the mind that there is a tendency to swing back to Him when left free, we are doing very well. For this means that however distracting our occupations are, the soul is giving Him a quiet attention all the time. We shall have reached the stage of praying always.

## The Mechanism of Frequent Prayer

In endeavoring to build up a spirit of prayer such as this, there is little use in relying on vague resolutions - made in moments of fervor to pray frequently. Vague resolutions have no influence over people so strongly drawn away from prayer as we unfortunately are. We must set up certain of the events of each day as regular calls to a word or thought of prayer.

Some of these reminders we already have: the Angelus, grace at meals, the passing of a Church, and so forth. This number can be largely increased, so that quite a number of items of our daily life will in the end cause an easy and natural lifting of the mind to God.

A passing funeral, the meeting of a friend, the hearing of a death, the striking of a clock, the ringing of a bell, the writing of a date, the sharpening of a pencil, the threading of a needle - one could go on for ever with suggestions for such a list. But the occupations of each one will determine what is best. Do not

mind how foolish your expedients seem. They may have all the more love in them. In any case nothing is foolish that leads to God.

It is better that the acts be not too frequent. They might tire out one's good intentions or interfere with attention to work. But above all, they must, for the beginner, be definite. That is, the resolution must take this shape: "Whenever I look at my watch (or whatever else it may be), I will say such an ejaculation." Do not stop because this practice may at first seem mechanical and undevotional and tiring. Habit will soon come to your aid and make it less difficult. But determination will always be needed, as the Tempter will make many an effort to hinder so excellent a practice.

While progress is being made in acquiring the spirit of prayer those things, which are a hindrance, must go. Not until there is quiet within us, can an attempt be made to build up a real spiritual life.

*From Can We Be Saints  
by Frank Duff*



# Special Excerpt

## APOSTOLIC PENITENTIARY DECREE

### **according to which is granted a daily Plenary Indulgence on the 150th Anniversary of the Apparition of the Blessed Virgin Mary at Lourdes**

On the occasion of the 150th Anniversary of the Apparition of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Grotto of Massabielle near Lourdes, a daily Plenary Indulgence is granted to the Christian faithful who, from 8 December 2007 until 8 December 2008, devoutly and in accordance with the established conditions, visit the Grotto of Massabielle, as well as those who, from 2-11 February 2008, visit a blessed image of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Lourdes solemnly displayed for public veneration in any church, oratory, grotto or suitable place.

God's omnipotence and infinite love have joined together in a marvellous bond the role of Mary, Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ and hence, Mother of his Mystical Body the Church, and the salvific work of the Church herself: Blessed Abbot Gueric thus connects the protection sought by the Christian faithful from Mother Mary with the Catholic Church's universal ministry of salvation: "The Blessed Mother of Christ, insofar as she sees herself the mother of Christians by way of mystery, also shows herself to be a mother by her solicitude and tender affection for them.... Consider if her children, prompted by a certain spontaneous sense of faith, do not also acknowledge her as mother as they find refuge, before all else, at the invocation of her name in every trial and danger just like children in the arms of their mother" (Sermo I, In Assumptione B. Mariae Virg.).

Similarly, the Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium* of the Second Vatican Council highlights what we might call the "joint" mission of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary and the Catholic Church: "For Mary, who since her entry into salvation history unites in herself and re-echoes the greatest teachings of the faith as she is proclaimed and venerated, calls the faithful to her Son and his sacrifice and to the love of the Father. Seeking after the glory of Christ, the Church becomes more like her exalted Type, and continually progresses in faith, hope and charity, seeking and doing the will of God in all things" (n. 65).

The history of the Church and the marvellous signs of Marian devotion continually and clearly confirm the ways of Divine Providence and foster devotion among the faithful.

A glance over the nearly 150 years since Mary Most Holy, revealing herself to little Bernadette Soubirous as the Immaculate Conception, wanted a shrine, a treasury of grace, to be built and maintained in the place called Massabielle, in the city of Lourdes, brings to mind the countless number of signs by which the supernatural life of souls and even the health of bodies have benefited much from the goodness of Almighty God. This plan of Divine Providence, accompanied by the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, clearly demonstrates that the integral end of man is the good of the whole human person, both here on earth and especially in eternal salvation.

Since the establishment of the Shrine at Lourdes, the Christian faithful have understood that there the Blessed Virgin Mary, through the ministry of the Catholic Church, desires to provide most lovingly for the complete health of men and women.

For as they venerate the Blessed Virgin Mary in the place "touched by her feet", they refresh themselves with the sacraments, make firm resolutions to lead more perfect Christian lives, perceive more clearly the meaning of the Church and experience the solid reasons for all these things: the very connection of these remarkable events over time has clearly attested to the joint action of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Church: indeed, the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary was defined in 1854, and in 1858, Mary Most Holy appeared to the devout young girl Bernadette Soubirous with ineffable motherly sweetness, uttering the words of the dogmatic definition: "I am the Immaculate Conception".

In order to allow the fruits of renewed holiness to grow from this blessed commemoration, the Supreme Pontiff Benedict XVI has generously decreed that the gift of a Plenary Indulgence be granted according to the following conditions:

Each and every member of the Christian faithful who, truly repentant, is purified through sacramental confession, restored through the Most Holy Eucharist and offers prayers for the intentions of the Supreme Pontiff, will be able to gain a Plenary Indulgence daily, which may also be applied, by way of suffrage, to the souls of the faithful in Purgatory:

A) If, during the year running from 8 December 2007 until the end of 8 December 2008, they devoutly visit the following places, preferably in this order - 1) the parish baptismal font used for the Baptism of Bernadette; 2) the house of the Soubirous family called the "cachot"; 3) the Grotto of Massabielle; 4) the chapel of the hospice where Bernadette made her First Communion - and pause to reflect for an appropriate length of time at each of these Jubilee sites, concluding with the Lord's Prayer, some legitimate form of the Profession of Faith, and the Jubilee prayer or some other Marian invocation.

B) If, from the Feast of the Presentation of our Lord on 2 February 2008 until the end of the Memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Lourdes on 11 February 2008, which is also the 150th Anniversary of the Apparition, they devoutly visit a blessed image of the Holy Virgin Mary of Lourdes in any church, chapel, grotto or other suitable place in which it is solemnly displayed, and in the presence of that image perform some pious act of Marian devotion, or at least pause to reflect for an appropriate length of time, concluding with the Lord's Prayer, some legitimate form of the Profession of Faith, and the Jubilee prayer or some other Marian invocation.

C) The elderly, sick, and all those unable to leave home for a just cause, if they consciously reject all sin and have the intention to fulfil the above-mentioned conditions as soon as possible, are likewise able to obtain - at home or wherever they may be - a Plenary Indulgence, if, between the days of 2 and 11 February 2008, they complete a "spiritual visit" (to the aforementioned places) in the desire of their heart, recite the prayers indicated above, and trustingly offer the pains and discomforts of their own lives to God through Mary.

In order that the Christian faithful may partake more readily of these heavenly gifts, priests who have received approval to hear confessions by the competent ecclesiastical authorities should welcome them with a willing and generous spirit and solemnly lead the recitation of public prayers to the Immaculate Virgin Mother of God.

Notwithstanding anything to the contrary.

Given in Rome, at the Offices of the Apostolic Penitentiary, 21 November 2007, on the Feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Cardinal James Francis Stafford  
Major Penitentiary

Gianfranco Girotti, O.F.M. Conv.  
Titular Bishop of Meta, Regent