



VATICAN - Benedict XVI at Montecassino: At the Regina Caeli, the Holy Father highlights the commitment to peace and the Day of Prayer for the Church in China: "May our common prayer obtain an effusion of gifts of the Holy Spirit, so that unity of all Christians, the catholicity and the universality of the Church always will be deeper and more visible."

Cassino (Agenzia Fides) – After the Mass celebrated in Piazza Miranda, in Cassino (Italy), the Holy Father Benedict XVI led the recitation of the Regina Caeli. Prior to the prayer, the Pope mentioned the value of peace, “the paschal gift par excellence,” with these words: “How much the Christian community and the whole of humanity need to taste completely the riches and the power of Christ's peace! St. Benedict was a great witness, because he welcomed it in his existence and fructified it in works of authentic cultural and spiritual renewal.” Recalling his recent pilgrimage to the Holy Land, a land marked by the Benedictine charism, the Pope mentioned that “peace is in the first place a gift of God, and therefore its power is in prayer. It is a gift given, however, to human care. Even the energy that is needed to actualize it is drawn from prayer. So, it is essential to cultivate an authentic prayer life to assure the social progress of peace...Only in learning, with the grace of Christ, to combat and defeat the evil within ourselves and in relationships with others, can we become authentic builders of peace and civil progress.”

Benedict XVI continued: “Today, March 24, liturgical memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Help of Christians -- who is venerated with great devotion at the shrine of Sheshan in Shanghai -- we celebrate the Day of Prayer for the Church in China. My thoughts turn to all the people of China. In particular I greet the Catholics of China with great affection and I exhort them to renew on this day their communion of faith in Christ and of fidelity to the Successor of Peter. May our common prayer obtain an effusion of gifts of the Holy Spirit, so that unity of all Christians, the catholicity and the universality of the Church always will be deeper and more visible.”

Greeting the pilgrims in various languages, in French the Holy Father mentioned his hope that the spiritual testimony of Saint Benedict “help nations who live on this continent to remain faithful to their Christian roots and to build a more united Europe, founded on the quest for justice and peace.” Then, in English, the Pope recalled the many soldiers who lost their lives here in the Second World War, inviting all to pray “especially for the souls of the fallen, commending them to God's infinite mercy, and we pray for an end to the wars that continue to afflict our world.”

Addressing German-speaking pilgrims, the Holy Father assured them of their prayers for their intentions at the tomb of Saint Benedict, Patron of Europe, “for peace on this continent and throughout the world.” He also mentioned the 100th anniversary of the death of Abbot Franz Pfanner, Founder of the Marianhill Missionaries: “We can take a phrase from this monk and missionary with us this week: 'Let the flame of joy and happiness burn bright and conserve it in your soul.' Yes, may this light of Christ never be extinguished in us! May the Lord accompany along your way.”

In Polish, the Holy Father said: “This afternoon I will go to the Polish cemetery to honor the memory of all the soldiers and of different nations that gave valorous testimony and lost their life here. Through the intercession of St. Benedict we ask God that, in prayer and work, we will discover the new dimensions of freedom, and that peace endures in Europe and in the whole world. (SL) (Agenzia Fides 25/5/2009)

> LINKS

Complete text of the Holy Father's address: http://www.fides.org/ita/magistero/bxvi/vmcassino_rcaeli_240509.html: