

DECEMBER 7, 2019 - FONTANELLE

**HOMILY OF THE BISHOP
DURING THE MASS OF THE INSTITUTION OF THE SANCTUARY**

On this eve of the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, in the radiant light of her mystery of grace and glory, profoundly grateful to God, we have the joy of starting here in this place, a new phase of the journey. With this celebration, and with the decree that has been proclaimed, today we constitute here, in Fontanelle, the diocesan shrine of Maria Rosa Mystica and Mother of the Church.

In fulfilling this solemn act, we actually insert ourselves in a furrow opened by those who preceded us, by the great crowd who up to now have prayed in this place with faith and opened their hearts to the action of the Holy Spirit, capable of converting and regenerating to the life of faith. And we also feel in communion with the thousands of people in the world who turn to the Blessed Virgin Mary, invoking her as Rosa Mystica and Mother of the Church, drawing inspiration from this place and from the events related with it.

Encouraged by the support of the Holy See and in full communion with the Supreme Pontiff Francis, we have the joy of dedicating this sanctuary to the Mother of the Lord, recognizing in her the full truth that these two suggestive qualifications express.

Rosa Mystica, flower of grace in which the beauty of redemption finds a privileged and singular manifestation; flower of tenderness, in which the petals form an embrace that tightens around a secret nucleus, guarded in its precious beauty; a flower, symbol of the Church itself, a communion of saints that flows as from a source from the side of Christ crucified, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

And how can we not think of the perspective in the admirable vision in the final song of Paradise of Divine Comedy? Saint Bernard, the mystic accompanying Dante in the last part of his journey, standing still before the Virgin in all her dazzling beauty and reflecting on the mystery of the incarnation who saw her as the protagonist, says of her: "Within thy womb rekindled was the Love, through whose warm influence in the eternal Peace this Flower hath blossomed thus". The flower germinated by the warmth of Christ's love in the work of redemption is the rose of the blessed, that is, the entire Church in the splendour of its holiness.

Thus, the qualification of the Virgin as "Rosa Mystica" is well united with that of "Mother of the Church". Together with her, the flower of Grace, even the disciples of the Lord, his brothers in the faith form the holy people of God; they become witnesses of the Gospel, announcing the beauty of the Kingdom of God, spreading in the world the fine perfume of Christ. And the Mother of Jesus, the God with us, also becomes the Mother of the Church: she involves the Church in Her generating power, defends her from evil, supports her on the path of conversion, consoles her in trials, sanctifies her in the truth and inspires her to carry out her missions.

I wish that in this light, each of us contemplates this sanctuary that we have constituted today. That in the wake of what has been lived until now, it may become more and more a place to feel the power of grace that is born of faith in Jesus Christ and devotion to his holy Mother.

Let it be a place in which to grow as a church and in which to pray for the Church. The water of this spring reminds us of the Baptism that every Christian has received; it reminds us of the fact that today the Church needs to return to the essence of her reality, her holiness, the experience of grace in the power of the Holy Spirit.

May this sanctuary be a place to live ever more intensely the beauty of belonging to the Church of the Lord, as a people redeemed by His blood, with a royal priesthood and as a holy nation.

May it be the place in which we can experience the divine power of conversion, of rebirth, of salvation, but also of consolation and hope in constant prayers and celebrations of the Sacraments.

May here, along with prayer, also the awareness of the value of penance and sacrifice be cultivated: of the loving daily offering of our proper life in communion with Christ the Redeemer and of penance as a lifestyle, capable of counteracting a worldliness that extinguishes the joy of the heart.

May it also be a place in which to raise intercessory prayer, in communion with the holy Mother of God, Rosa Mystica and Mother of the Church. Let us pray in this sanctuary for the holiness of the whole Church, and in particular for its ministers, for those whom the Lord has called to a life of consecration.

Let us ask for them the grace of holiness, a clear and joyful witness, asking forgiveness for all their guilt and for the evil caused by them to the mystical body of the Church. Let us ask the Blessed Virgin Mary to preserve, accompany and support all consecrated men and women in their noble mission of promulgating the Gospel.

And while we say all this, we cannot but think of the testimony of Pierina Gilli. This place is linked to her and draws her spirituality from her unique experience. The Church is in her maternal solicitude, called to listen to the signs of the Spirit.

The times and the ways of spiritual discernment are part of a providential design, whose contours often escape our clear vision. So let us keep ourselves open to the will of the Lord and continue this discernment about the events that happened in this place. We are encouraged by the full communion between our Diocese and the Holy See, in the common desire to truthfully interpret the extraordinary experience lived by Pierina Gilli in great humility and with sincere faith. The Blessed Virgin Mary will also watch over this path that continues.

We entrust this sanctuary to the holy Mother of the Lord, Rosa Mystica and Mother of the Church. We ask her to make it more and more a place of grace. From Her we hope every good for our diocesan Church and for the whole Church.

† Pierantonio Tremolada

"In Thy womb was rekindled the Love"

Thus Dante, made Saint Bernard describe in the last Chant of Paradise, the great mystery of the Incarnation that took place in Mary's womb, so that the most beautiful Flower, that of the birth of the Infant Jesus, could germinate for us.

With these same words, our Bishop of Brescia, during his homily of the Vigil of the Immaculate Conception, in the solemn celebration of the constitution of the Diocesan Shrine Rosa Mystica - Mother of the Church, reminded how the Church carefully preserves its germinating nucleus and embraces it with a fiery eternal love, and how the Virgin Mary, with the delicacy of a Rose, wraps with her petals all her children who have the desire to return to this embrace, especially the most distant and suffering ones.

This is the task that the Bishop solemnly entrusts to us and for which this new Marian Shrine wishes to be a humble and simple instrument, based on the example of Pierina Gilli, docile to the powerful action of the Spirit and open to recognizing the ever new fruits of the Grace.

With a heart full of emotion and gratitude for the great gift we have received from our diocesan Church, united with so many faithful and devotees of Rosa Mystica, who in these days have gathered around us with great affection, we wish to place ourselves with renewed confidence in the wake of this long ecclesial journey,

which today has reached a historic turning point. May the Immaculate Virgin help us all to understand how to offer our lives ever more and better, to announce the beauty of the Gospel.

To all a sincere wish for a Holy Christmas and a New Year of Grace in the Lord Jesus!

Mgr Marco Alba
Episcopal Delegate