

John Paul Entrusts Europe to Mary, Asking to 'Dry Tears' Caused by Hatred

CASTEL GANDOLFO, Italy — Pope John Paul II concluded a series of Sunday talks on Europe by entrusting the continent to Mary and asking her to "dry the tears" caused by violence throughout the world.

Addressing pilgrims in the courtyard of his summer residence outside Rome on Aug. 31, the Holy Father prayed that Mary would help Europe become "a symphony of nations committed to building the civilization of love and peace."

To highlight Mary's traditional place among Europeans, John Paul noted that Sept. 1 marked the 50th anniversary of the day tears were seen flowing from a statue of Mary in Syracuse, Sicily. The event was later recognized as authentic by Sicilian bishops and by Pope Pius XII.

The Pope greeted Sicilian Catholics and Church leaders who commemorated the event, includ-

ing a delegation of pilgrims who came to the papal residence so the Holy Father could bless a gold crown for the statue. He said the statue of the "Madonna of Tears" had stirred deep spiritual enthusiasm among many people.

"How mysterious are these tears. They speak of sadness and tenderness, of comfort and divine mercy. They are the sign of a maternal presence and an appeal to convert to God, leaving behind the path of evil to follow faithfully Jesus Christ," he said.

"To you, sweet Madonna of Tears, we present the Church and the whole world. See who has most need of forgiveness and reconciliation; bring harmony to families and peace between peoples," he said.

"Dry the tears that hatred and violence provoke in many regions of the world," he said, "especially in the Middle East and on the African continent." (CNS)