



## **What shrine did Pope Benedict XVI call his “spiritual homeland”?**

Bavaria’s ancient Marian shrine formed this pope’s spiritual life.

White walls and iconic green steeples shine in the Bavarian sun. Little trees, hedged with carefully-clipped box shrubs, offer cool shade. A carved fountain burbles cheerfully. It’s Chapel Square, Altötting, in the summer.

Pope Benedict XVI grew up nearby, visiting the Square and its church frequently as a child. Within the church is the favorite devotion of this Bavarian pope: the Black Madonna of Altötting.



Shrine of Our Lady of Altötting

The Black Madonna was carved in the 1300s. In 1489, the first miracle at the feet of the statue occurred when the Blessed Mother heard the prayer of a mother for the resurrection of her dead son. Since then, the Shrine of Our Lady of Altötting has been a busy pilgrimage station.

Some of Pope Benedict XVI’s earliest memories came from his own family’s pilgrimages to Altötting. Later, after his ordination and elevation to the episcopate, he returned to venerate the Blessed Mother at Altötting several times.

For him, Altötting was a reminder that we strive above all to be close to Jesus, and that the Blessed Mother is the quickest route to Him. Through her, we learn humility and obedience and how to ask for and accept God's will.

"Here in Altötting," said the pope, "the adoration of the Lord in the Eucharist has found a new location in the old treasury. Mary and Jesus go together. Through Mary we want to continue our converse with the Lord and to learn how to receive him better."

You don't have to go to a great shrine to pray for the Blessed Mother's intercession—in fact, she's happiest when invited to your own home. Bring a shrine of Our Lady of Grace into your home space. Ornatly decorated like a Gothic cathedral, and lit up with a comforting glow, this shrine is perfect as a helpful light in the dark or as a prayer-helphmate. Available today at The Catholic Company!