



The Holy See

ORDINARY PUBLIC CONSISTORY FOR THE CREATION OF NEW CARDINALS

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

St. Peter's Basilica
Saturday, 24 November 2007

Your Eminences,
Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and in the Priesthood,
Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today, in this Vatican Basilica, the heart of the Christian world, an important and solemn ecclesial event is being renewed: the Ordinary Public Consistory for the creation of 23 new Cardinals, with the conferral of the hat and the assignation of the title. It is an event that always inspires special emotion, not only in those who are admitted to the College of Cardinals with these rites but also throughout the Church, gladdened by this eloquent sign of Catholic unity. The ceremony's structure stresses the value of the task the new Cardinals are required to carry out in close cooperation with the Successor of Peter. It also invites the People of God to pray that in their service these Brothers of ours may remain ever faithful to Christ, if need be to the point of giving their lives, and that they may allow themselves to be guided by his Gospel alone. Let us therefore gather around them with faith and raise above all our prayerful thanks to the Lord.

In this joyful and intensely spiritual atmosphere, I offer my affectionate greetings to each one of you, dear Brothers. As of this day you are members of the College of Cardinals, chosen to be, in accordance with an ancient institution, the closest counsellors and collaborators of Peter in his guidance of the Church. I greet and thank Archbishop Leonardo Sandri who has addressed to me courteous and devoted words on your behalf, at the same time underlining the significance and importance of the ecclesial event we are experiencing. I also wish, as is only right, to remember the late Bishop Ignacy Jez, whom the God of all grace called to himself just before his

appointment as Cardinal in order to offer him a very different crown: that of eternal glory in Christ. I then address a cordial greeting to the Cardinals present and also to those who are unable to be with us in person but are united with us in spirit. The celebration of the Consistory is always a providential opportunity to offer *urbi et orbi*, to the city of Rome and to the whole world, the testimony of that special unity which gathers the Cardinals around the Pope, Bishop of Rome. On such a solemn occasion, I am likewise eager to address a respectful and deferential greeting to the Government Representatives and Personalities who have assembled here from every part of the world, as well as the relatives, friends, priests, men and women Religious and faithful of the individual local Churches from which the new Cardinals come. Finally, I greet all those who have come here to gather around them and express their esteem and affection in festive joy.

With today's celebration, dear Brothers, you are inserted with a full title into the venerable Church of Rome, whose Pastor is the Successor of Peter. The College of Cardinals thus relives the ancient *presbyterium* of the Bishop of Rome, whose members ensure that he is not deprived of their precious collaboration in all that concerns the fulfilment of the tasks connected with his universal apostolic ministry, while they carry out pastoral and liturgical functions in the various Churches.

Times have changed and today the great family of Christ's disciples has spread on every continent to the furthest corners of the earth. Virtually all the world's languages are spoken in it and its members include people of every culture. The diversity of the members of the College of Cardinals, due both to their geographical provenance and their cultural background, enhance this providential growth and at the same time highlight the different pastoral requirements to which the Pope must respond. The Church's universality, her catholicity, is clearly reflected, therefore, in the composition of the College of Cardinals: many are Pastors of diocesan communities, others serve the Apostolic See directly, and yet others have rendered a praiseworthy service in specific pastoral sectors.

Each one of you, dear and venerable new Cardinal-Brothers, therefore represents a portion of the interconnected Mystical Body of Christ which is the Church disseminated everywhere. I am well aware of all the efforts and sacrifices that the care of souls entails today, but I am also acquainted with the generosity that sustains your daily apostolic activity. Therefore, on the occasion we are experiencing, I am eager to confirm to you my sincere appreciation for the service you have faithfully carried out for so many years of work in the various contexts of your ecclesial ministry. Raised to the dignity of Cardinal, you are now called to undertake this service with even greater responsibility, in very close communion with the Bishop of Rome. I now think with affection of the communities entrusted to your care, and in a special way of those most tried by suffering, challenges and difficulties of various kinds. Among the latter, how can we fail at this joyful moment to look with apprehension and affection at the beloved Christian communities in Iraq? These brothers and sisters of ours in the faith are experiencing in their own flesh the tragic consequences of a prolonged conflict and at this time are living in an especially fragile and delicate political situation. By calling the Patriarch of the Chaldean Church to enter the College of Cardinals, I

intended to give a material expression to my spiritual closeness to and affection for those peoples. Let us reaffirm together, dear and venerable Brothers, the entire Church's solidarity with the Christians of that beloved Land and invite the faithful to invoke from the Merciful God the advent of the longed-for reconciliation and peace for all the peoples concerned.

We have just listened to the Word of God, which helps us to understand better the solemn moment we are living. In the Gospel passage, Jesus has just recalled for the third time the fate that awaited him in Jerusalem, but the disciples' social advancement got the upper hand over the fear that had momentarily assailed them. After the confession of Peter at Caesarea and the discussion on the way as to which of them was the greatest, ambition spurred the sons of Zebedee to claim the best places for themselves in the messianic kingdom at the end of time. In the race for privileges, these two knew very well what they wanted, as did the other 10 despite their "virtuous" indignation. Actually, however, they did not realize what they were asking. It was Jesus who made them understand, speaking in very different terms of the "ministry" that awaited them. He corrected their crude conception of merit which claimed that man can acquire worthiness in God's eyes.

The Evangelist Mark, dear and venerable Brothers, reminds us that every true disciple of Christ can aspire to one thing only: to sharing in his Passion without claiming any reward. Christians are called to assume the condition of a "servant", following in Jesus' footsteps, that is, spending their lives for others in a free and disinterested way. It is not the search for power and success but humble self-giving for the good of the Church that must mark our every action and our every word. True Christian greatness, in fact, does not consist in dominating but in serving. Today, Jesus repeats to every one of us that he "came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mk 10: 45). This is the ideal that must direct your service. Dear Brothers, on entering the College of Cardinals, the Lord asks of you and entrusts to you the service of love: love for God, love for his Church, love for the brethren with maximum, unconditional dedication, *usque ad sanguinis effusionem*, as is shown by the formula for the conferral of the hat and the red colour of the clothes you are wearing.

May you be apostles of God who is Love and witnesses of evangelical hope: this is what the Christian people expect of you. Today's ceremony emphasizes the great responsibility that weighs upon each one of you in this regard, venerable and dear Brothers, which is confirmed in the Apostle Peter's words that we have just heard: "Reverence Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to make a defence to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you" (I Pt 3: 15). This responsibility is not exempt from risks, but as St Peter further said: "It is better to suffer for doing right, if that should be God's will, than for doing wrong" (I Pt 3: 17). Christ asks you to profess his truth to men and women, to embrace and share his cause; and to do all this "with gentleness and reverence; and keep your conscience clear" (I Pt 3: 15-16): in other words, with that inner humility which is the fruit of cooperation with God's grace.

Dear brothers and sisters, tomorrow, in this same Basilica, I shall have the joy of celebrating the Eucharist together with the new Cardinals on the Solemnity of Christ, the King of the Universe, and I will give the ring to them. It will be an especially important and suitable opportunity to reaffirm our unity in Christ and to renew our common desire to serve him with total generosity. Accompany them with your prayers so that they may respond to the gift they have received with full and constant dedication. Let us now turn with trust to Mary, Queen of Apostles. May her spiritual presence today in this unique "Upper Room" be a pledge for the new Cardinals and for all of us of the constant outpouring of the Holy Spirit, who guides the Church on her way through history. Amen!

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