



The Holy See

ORDINARY PUBLIC CONSISTORY

HOMILY OF JOHN PAUL II

Wednesday, 21 February 2001

1. *"Whoever would be great among you must be your servant"* (Mk 10: 43). Once again we have heard Christ's disconcerting words ringing in our ears. Today they have echoed in this square particularly for you, venerable and dear Brothers in the episcopate and the priesthood, whom I have had the joy of enrolling among the members of the College of Cardinals. With deep affection I offer you my cordial greeting, which I extend to the many people who have gathered around you. I address a special word of gratitude to dear Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re for his kind words to me, warmly expressing the sentiments you all share.

I next extend a fraternal greeting to all the other Cardinals present, as well as to the Archbishops and Bishops who are here with us. I also greet the official delegations, which have come from various countries to celebrate their Cardinals: through them, I send my respectful greetings to the authorities and to the beloved peoples they represent.

I am delighted to note the presence at the Consistory of Fraternal Delegates from several Churches and Ecclesial Communities. I extend a cordial greeting to them, in the certainty that this thoughtful gesture on their part will foster ever greater mutual understanding and progress towards full communion.

Today is a great celebration for the universal Church, which is enriched by 44 new Cardinals. And it is a great celebration for the city of Rome, the see of the Prince of the Apostles and of his Successor, not only because she is establishing a special relationship with each of the new Cardinals, but also because the coming together here of so many people from every part of the world gives her the opportunity to relive a moment of joyful welcome. For this solemn gathering recalls the many events that marked the Great Jubilee which closed just over a month ago. This morning "Catholic" Rome warmly embraces the new Cardinals with the same enthusiasm, knowing that another important page of her 2,000-year history is being written.

2. *"The Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many"* (Mk 10: 45).

The Evangelist Mark's words help us to understand better the profound meaning of an event like the Consistory we are celebrating. The Church does not rely on human calculations and powers, but on the crucified Jesus and the consistent witness borne to him by the apostles, martyrs and confessors of the faith. This witness can also demand the heroism of total self-giving to God and to others. Every Christian knows that he is called to an uncompromising fidelity, which may even require the ultimate sacrifice. And you in particular, venerable Brothers, raised to the dignity of Cardinal, know this. You are committed to faithfully following Christ, the Martyr *par excellence* and the faithful Witness.

Your service to the Church is also expressed in assisting and collaborating with the Successor of Peter, in order to lighten the burden of a ministry that extends to the ends of the earth. Together with him, you must be strenuous defenders of the truth and guardians of the heritage of faith and morals which originated in the Gospel. You will thus be reliable guides for everyone and, in the first place, for priests, consecrated persons and committed lay people.

The Pope counts on your help in serving the Christian community, which is confidently entering the third millennium. As true Pastors, you will know how to be alert sentinels defending the flock entrusted to you by the "Chief Shepherd", who is preparing for you "the unfading crown of glory" (1 Pt 5: 4).

3. Beginning today a very special bond links you with Peter's Successor, who by Christ's will - as has been rightly recalled - is "the perpetual and visible source and foundation of the unity both of the Bishops and of the whole company of the faithful" (*Lumen gentium*, n. 23). This link makes you, in a new way, eloquent signs of communion. If you promote communion, the entire Church will benefit. St Peter Damian, whose liturgical memorial occurs today, says: "It is unity that makes the many parts into a single whole, which brings different human wills together in a framework of love and harmony of spirit" (*Opusc.* XIII, 24).

The "many parts" of the Church are expressed in you, whose experiences have matured on various continents and in various services to the People of God. It is essential that the "parts" you represent should be gathered into "a single whole" through love, which is the bond of perfection. Only in this way will Christ's prayer be fulfilled: "that they may all be one; even as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (cf. *Jn* 17: 21).

From the Second Vatican Council to this day, much has been done to enlarge the areas of individual responsibility in the service of ecclesial communion. There is no doubt that with God's grace it will be possible to do even more. Today you are proclaimed and created Cardinals so that you will dedicate yourselves, to the extent of your responsibility, to increasing the spirituality of communion in the Church. For it alone, "by prompting a trust and openness wholly in accord with the dignity and responsibility of every member of the People of God, supplies institutional reality with a soul" (*Novo millennio ineunte*, n. 45).

4. Venerable Brothers, you are the first Cardinals to be created in the new millennium. After having drawn in abundance from the sources of divine mercy during the Holy Year, the mystical barque of the Church is preparing anew "to put out into the deep", to bring the message of salvation to the world. Together let us unfurl her sails to the wind of the Spirit, examining the signs of the times and interpreting them in the light of the Gospel, to answer "the ever recurring questions which men ask about the meaning of this present life and of the life to come" (*Gaudium et spes*, n. 4).

The world is becoming ever more complex and changeable, and the acute awareness of the existing discrepancies creates or increases contradictions and imbalances (cf. *ibid.*, n. 8). The enormous potential of scientific and technological progress, as well as the phenomenon of globalization that is extending to ever new areas, require us to be open to dialogue with every person and every social institution, with the intention of giving to each an account for the hope that is in us (cf. 1 *Pt* 3: 15).

However, venerable Brothers, we know that to face these new tasks effectively, it is necessary to foster an ever deeper communion with the Lord. It is precisely the red colour of the robes you wear that reminds you of this urgent need. Is that colour not the symbol of ardent love for Christ? Does that bright red not symbolize the burning fire of love for the Church which must nurture within you the readiness, if necessary, to bear the supreme witness of bloodshed? "*Usque ad effusionem sanguinis*", says the ancient formula. In looking at you, the People of God must be able to find a concrete and shining reference-point that will spur them to be truly the light of the world and the salt of the earth (cf. *Mt* 5: 13).

5. You come from 27 countries on four continents and speak various languages. Is this not a sign of the Church's ability, now that she has spread to every corner of the globe, to understand peoples with different traditions and languages, in order to bring to all the message of Christ? In him and only in him can we find salvation. This is the truth that today we would like to reaffirm together. Christ walks with us and guides our steps.

Two hundred years after the birth of Cardinal Newman, I seem to hear ringing out the words with which he accepted the sacred purple from my Predecessor Pope Leo XIII: "The Church", he said, "has nothing more to do than to go on in her own proper duties, in confidence and peace; to stand still and to see the salvation of God. *Mansueti hereditabunt terram, et delectabuntur in multitudine pacis* (*Ps* 36: 11)". May the words of this great churchman encourage us all to grow in love for our pastoral ministry.

Venerable Brothers, gathered around you to share in this joyful moment are your relatives, friends and the faithful entrusted to your pastoral care. Together with the entire Christian people who are spiritually present, they are praying fervently to the Lord for your new service to the Apostolic See and to the universal Church.

Mary, who, in accepting the divine messenger's invitation, was able to reply promptly: "Let it be to me according to your word" (*Lk* 1: 38), extends her maternal mantle over you. The Apostles Peter and Paul and your patron saints are interceding for you. And my fraternal remembrance in prayer and my blessing accompany you.