



The Holy See

ORDINARY PUBLIC CONSISTORY FOR THE CREATION OF NEW CARDINALS

HOMILY OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II

Saturday 21 February 1998

"I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ as well as a partaker in the glory that is to be revealed" (1 Pt 5:1).

1. I make my own the words of the Apostle Peter in addressing you, venerable and beloved Brothers whom I have had the joy of making members of the College of Cardinals. These words recall that as "elders" we are fundamentally rooted in the mystery of Christ, the Head and Shepherd. Since we share in the fullness of sacred Orders, we are a sacramental representation of him in the Church and for the Church, and are called to proclaim his Word authoritatively, to repeat his acts of forgiveness and his offer of salvation, and to show his loving concern to the point of giving ourselves totally for the flock (cf. *Pastores dabo vobis*, n. 15). Today this rootedness in Christ receives a further specification in you, venerable Brothers, since by being raised to the rank of Cardinal, you are called and enabled to undertake an ecclesial service of even greater responsibility, in the closest collaboration with the Bishop of Rome. Therefore, everything that is taking place today in St Peter's Square is a call to a more demanding service since, as we heard in the Gospel, "*whoever would be first among you must be slave of all*" (Mk 10:44). The choice belongs to God, the serving to us. Should not the primacy of Peter itself be understood as a service to the unity, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity of the Church? The Successor of Peter is the servant of the servants of God, according to St Gregory the Great's expression. And the Cardinals are his first advisers and collaborators in governing the universal Church: they are "his" Bishops, "his" priests and "his" deacons, not merely in the early historical phase of Rome but in shepherding the whole People of God, over which the See of Rome "presides in charity" (cf. *St Ignatius of Antioch, To the Romans*, 1, 1).

2. With these thoughts I extend my cordial greetings to the venerable Cardinals present who, in the College of Cardinals and particularly at this Public Consistory, eminently display as it were the Church's "symphonic" nature, that is, her unity in the universality of backgrounds and the variety of ministries. Today I share with them the joy of welcoming 20 new Brothers, who come from 13 countries on four continents and have given excellent proof of fidelity to Christ and to the

Church, some by directly serving the Apostolic See, others by leading important Dioceses. In particular, I thank Cardinal Jorge Arturo Medina Estévez for expressing the sentiments you share on this highly significant occasion. At this moment, I would like to turn my prayerful thoughts to the late Archbishop Giuseppe Uhaè, whom the God of all grace — as the Apostle Peter wrote — called to himself just before his appointment, to offer him a very different crown: that of eternal glory in Christ (cf. 1 Pt 5:10). I would also like to inform you that I have reserved *in pectore* the appointment of two other prelates as Cardinals.

3. Today's celebration occurs during the year of the *Holy Spirit* in preparation for the *Great Jubilee of the Year 2000*, according to the itinerary marked out in the Apostolic Exhortation *Tertio millennio adveniente*, which gathered together and developed the suggestions made at a memorable Extraordinary Consistory held in June 1994. What better ecclesial and spiritual context for invoking the gifts of the Holy Spirit upon the new Cardinals, "*the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and fortitude, the spirit of knowledge and piety, ... and the spirit of the fear of the Lord*" (Is 11:2-3, *Vulgate*)? Who more than they needs the abundant comfort of these gifts, in order to fulfil the mission they have received from the Lord? Who more than they is aware of the fact that "the Spirit is the principal agent of the new evangelization", and that "the unity of the Body of Christ is founded on the activity of the Spirit, guaranteed by the apostolic ministry and sustained by mutual love" (*Tertio millennio adveniente*, nn. 45, 47).

Venerable Brothers, may the Holy Spirit the Paraclete dwell fully in each of you, fill you with divine consolation and thus make you in turn the consolers of all who are afflicted, particularly the most sorely tried members of the Church, of the communities that have endured the greatest sufferings for the sake of the Gospel. May you be able to tell them with the Apostle Peter: "*If we are afflicted, it is for our comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer*" (2 Cor 1:6).

4. Venerable Brothers, you have been created Cardinals as we are rapidly approaching the third millennium of the Christian era. We can already see the Holy Door of the *Great Jubilee of the Year 2000* appearing on the horizon, and this gives your mission an enormously important value and meaning. You are called, together with the other members of the College of Cardinals, to help the Pope steer the barque of Peter towards that historic goal. I rely on your support and on your enlightened and expert advice to guide the Church in the final phase of preparation for the Holy Year. As I turn my gaze with you beyond the threshold of the Year 2000, I invoke from the Lord an abundance of gifts from the divine Spirit for the whole Church, so that the "springtime" of the Second Vatican Council may find in the new millennium its "summer", that is to say, its full development. The mission to which God calls you today requires attentive and constant discernment. That is why I urge you to be increasingly men of God, penetrating listeners of his Word, who can reflect its light on the Christian people and on all men and women of goodwill. Only if she is sustained by the light of the Gospel can the Church face with steadfast hope her present and future challenges.

5. I now extend a cordial *welcome to the relatives* of the new Cardinals, as well as to the *delegations* from their various Churches of origin and to the other civil and government *representatives* who have wished to take part in this solemn ecclesial moment.

Dear brothers and sisters, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, I thank you for your presence, an expression of the affection and esteem which tie you to the Archbishops and Bishops whom I have made members of the College of

Cardinals. I see in you, as I do in them, an image of the Church's universality and an eloquent sign of the bond of communion of the laity and consecrated persons with their Pastors, as well as of priests and deacons with their Bishops. Starting today, the new Cardinals will have even greater need of your spiritual support: always accompany them with your prayer, as you already do.

6. Tomorrow I will have the joy of celebrating with particular solemnity the feast of the Chair of Peter together with the new Cardinals, to whom I will give their ring. I would like at this time to invoke the heavenly *intercession of the Prince of the Apostles*: may he who felt all his own unworthiness in the presence of his Lord's glory obtain for each of you humility of heart, which is indispensable each day for accepting as a gift the high office entrusted to you.

May Peter, who by following Christ became a fisher of men, enable you to be grateful each day for sharing in a singular way in the ministry of his Successor. May he who in this city of Rome sealed his witness to Christ with his own blood, enable you to give your life for the Gospel and thus make fruitful the harvest of God's kingdom. I entrust your persons and your ecclesial service to *Mary, Queen of Apostles*: may her spiritual presence today in this Upper Room of ours be a pledge to you of the constant outpouring of the Spirit, through whom you will be able to proclaim to everyone, in the various languages of the world, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Amen!

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