



The Holy See

MASS FOR THE CARDINALS AND BISHOPS WHO DIED THIS PAST YEAR

HOMILY OF JOHN PAUL II

Tuesday, 14 November 2000

"I know that my Redeemer lives" (cf. *Jb* 19: 25).

1. The sacred author's words bring us into the faith-filled atmosphere of today's celebration, which sees us gathered in heartfelt remembrance of the Cardinals, Archbishops and Bishops who died during the year now coming to an end. Our act is one of dutiful suffrage and spiritual solidarity for these our brothers, who made service to the Gospel and the Church the measure of their own lives.

Today they hear again the Lord's comforting promise: "If anyone serves me, the Father will honour him" (*Jn* 12: 26). Those who faithfully dedicate themselves to the Gospel cause will find an eternal reward in God. In Christ's logic, service to the community of the redeemed thus becomes a cause of glory and unending life. Those who spared no effort for the kingdom of God during their earthly pilgrimage, will be welcomed by him, the Living One, who conquered death and is now seated at the right hand of the Father.

2. As we gather together around the altar on which is made present the sacrifice that proclaims the victory of Life over death, of grace over sin and of heaven over hell, our thoughts turn gratefully to God for having given us these brothers whom he has now called to himself. I am thinking in particular of the members of the College of Cardinals who have died in recent months: Cardinal Paolo Dezza, Ignatius Kung Pin-Mei, Antony Padiyara, Bernardino Echeverría Ruiz, John Joseph O'Connor, Vincentas Sladkevicius, Paul Zoungrana, Augusto Vargas Alzamora, Vincenzo Fagiolo, Paul Gouyon, Egano Righi-Lambertini and Pietro Palazzini. Memories of them and of all the deceased Archbishops and Bishops come to mind: during their lives they proclaimed the Gospel, built up the Church, offered the grace-filled gifts of the sacraments and did good. Now, with grateful hearts we entrust them to the Lord's generous recompense for the good works and positive examples they have left us. We also entrust them to his infinite mercy, imploring him on their behalf to set right any remnants of human weakness.

Our brothers firmly believed in Christ and based their entire lives on this faith. Human life cannot on its own attain the beatific vision, which is a gift reserved for those who believe. This is why the faithful proclaim with sure confidence: "I know that my Redeemer lives" (cf. *Jb* 19: 25). We know that in the end Christ, our Saviour, will come to welcome us and we will be with him for ever.

3. Dear brothers and sisters! Our faith as Christians is based on the words of Christ who says in the Gospel just proclaimed: "He who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life" (*Jn* 5: 24). The Church tirelessly proclaims these words to every person, so that everyone can open himself to faith and inherit eternal beatitude.

This perspective shows how important our pilgrimage in the world is! It is a time, of greater or lesser length, which we are given, in order to know Christ and to grow in communion with him.

Whoever believes in the Incarnate Son of God will live for ever; whoever loves must not fear hardships; whoever relies on him cannot give up in the face of any obstacle. Christ is the fundamental goal of his life. He believes, trusts and entrusts himself to him: in this way he enters into the secret of his love, which saves and fills our hearts with joy.

What a treasure faith is and how urgent is the task to proclaim it to those who still lack it! The word that explains, that reassures and that shows the way must be given to man, who is thirsting for truth and love. The word that heals. This word is the eternal Word who came from the Father's bosom to bring us life. It is Christ, our Redeemer, whom we continually contemplate during the Great Jubilee. All who listen to his word "will live" (cf. *Jn* 5: 25). Blessed are those who proclaim it! Blessed are those who serve it and build their lives on it!

4. Dear brothers and sisters, the certainty that Christ is our Saviour and that he died and rose again for our sake comforts and sustains us as we continue on our pilgrimage to the heavenly homeland. As the days and seasons pass, God's word rings out: "Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever!" (*Heb* 13: 8). This truth has accompanied us through the Jubilee year, marking our progress with hope. This is the faith of the Church. This is our faith.

We would like to reaffirm our faith as we pray in suffrage for the Pastors we are commemorating today. It is a remembrance woven with affection and gratitude, which opens to the reassuring knowledge that one day we will be with them again to praise the Lord of mercy and life in eternity. As we entrust to the Supreme Pastor these brothers in the priesthood whom he has called to himself, let us renew our fidelity to Christ, in the hope that one day we too may hear his comforting voice: Come, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your Master (cf. *Mt* 25: 21).

Let us entrust to Mary, Mother of Hope, these devoted sons of hers, so that she may bring them into the kingdom of eternal happiness.

In Christ, *requiescant in pace!* Amen.

