



The Holy See

MASS FOR THE CARDINALS AND BISHOPS
WHO DIED THIS PAST YEAR

HOMILY OF JOHN PAUL II

Tuesday, 6 November 2001

1. God the Father *"has regenerated us to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead"* (1 Pt 1,3). Guided by these words of the Apostle Peter, we remember in a spirit of hope the Cardinals, Archbishops and Bishops who left us in the course of these months. They lived their earthly day with labour and toil in the vineyard of the Lord; now they rest in the sleep of peace awaiting the final resurrection.

On the wall of the shadow of death, faith projects the radiant light of the Risen One, the first fruit of those who have passed from the fragility of the human condition and now share in God the gift of life without end. With his Cross, Christ has given new meaning to death. In him, in fact, death becomes the sublime act of *obedient love to the Father*, and the supreme witness of *mutual love for humanity*. And so in the light of the mystery of Easter, the end of human existence can no longer be considered to be a condemnation without possibility of appeal, but the passage to full and final life, that consists of perfect communion with God.

The Word of God, which resounded in this sombre celebration, opens our hearts to the perspective of a "living hope": in the face of the passing scene of this world, it offers the promise of an "inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading".

2. With these sentiments, as we gather around the altar, we remember our brothers who have recently returned to the house of the Father. Called to the grace of faith in Baptism, they were chosen as Successors of the Apostles to be guides of the People of God and, as the Synod recently reminded us, "servants of the Gospel of Jesus Christ for the hope of the world". In the real and mysterious communion between the Church in her pilgrimage on earth and the

Church triumphant, we are close to them in charity and certain that they will continue to be spiritually close to the Christian community on pilgrimage.

Let us recall the deceased Cardinals Myroslav Ivan Lubachivsky, Giuseppe Casoria, José Alí Lebrún Moratinos, Pierre Eyt, Thomas Joseph Winning, Silvio Oddi, Giuseppe Maria Sensi, and the Patriarch Maximos V Hakim. We also wish to remember in this celebration all the Archbishops and Bishops who have left us in the last months. These beloved brothers in the Episcopate are now in the hands of God, having spent their lives in the service of the cause of the Gospel and for the good of their brothers.

3. *"Come to me... Take my yoke upon you and learn from me... you will find rest for your souls"* (Mt 1,28-29). The words Jesus spoke to his disciples sustain and comfort us at the beginning of the month of November as we commemorate our dear departed ones. If their departure saddens our spirit, the promise of Christ consoles us. He is with us and guides us toward the full knowledge of the Father: "No one knows the Father except the Son and him to whom the Son wishes to reveal him" (Mt 11,27). Such knowledge, which continually progresses throughout the journey of life on earth, will reach its full realization when we shall contemplate face to face the countenance of God. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* reminds us that, thanks to the obedience of Christ, Christian death takes on a positive meaning, as our passing from this world to the Father: "Through Baptism, the Christian has already 'died with Christ' sacramentally in order to live a new life; and if we die in Christ's grace, physical death completes this 'dying with Christ' and so completes our incorporation into Him in his redeeming act" (n.1010).

4. We remember with particular affection our deceased Brothers, who in Baptism were incorporated into Christ, and, were made like him by means of the fullness of the Priesthood, and we pray fervently to the Lord for them. May the Father of mercy free them definitively from the remains of human frailty in order to make them enjoy eternally the heavenly reward promised to the good and faithful workers of the Gospel.

We wish to entrust their chosen souls to the motherly care of the Blessed Virgin Mary, whom they devotedly honoured and loved when they were on earth, so that she may open the gates of Paradise to them. May Mary, Mother of Hope, turn her merciful eyes to these brothers of ours and show them, after this exile, Jesus the blessed fruit of her womb. O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary. Amen!