



The Holy See

EUCCHARISTIC CELEBRATION WITH THE NEW CARDINALS *HOMILY OF JOHN PAUL II* Wednesday, 22 October

2003 1. "*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God*" (Mt 16: 16). How often have I repeated these words in the 25 years of my Pontificate! I have spoken them in the main languages of the world and in many corners of the earth. Indeed, the Successor of Peter can never forget the dialogue between the Teacher and the Apostle: "*You are the Christ...*". "*You are Peter...*". This "you" [in former usage, "thou"] is preceded by [the plural form of] "you": "*Who do you say that I am?*" (Mt 16: 15). Jesus' question is addressed to the group of disciples, and Simon Peter responds on behalf of them all. *The first service that Peter and his Successors render to the community of believers* is exactly this: the profession of faith in "*Christ, the Son of the living God*". 2. "*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God!*". Today let us renew the Apostle Peter's profession of faith in this Basilica that bears his name. In this Basilica the Bishops of Rome, who succeed one another down the centuries, convoke the believers of the City and of the World and strengthen them in the truth and unity of the faith. But at the same time, as Bernini's Colonnade in front of the Basilica beautifully expresses, this Basilica opens its arms wide to all humanity, as if to show that the Church is sent to proclaim the Good News to all men and women without exception.

Unity and openness, communion and mission: this is what the Church breathes. In particular, this is the twofold dimension of the *Petrine ministry: a service of unity and of mission*. The Bishop of Rome has the joy of sharing this service with the other successors of the Apostles, close to him in the one Episcopal College.³ By ancient tradition, the Successor of Peter avails himself in particular of this service of *collaboration on the part of the Cardinals*. Their College reflects the universality of the Church, the one People of God rooted in the multiplicity of the nations (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, n. 13). On this occasion, I would like to express to you, dear and venerable Brother Cardinals, my gratitude for the effective help you guarantee to me. I would then like to greet the *new members of the College of Cardinals*. The ring I will shortly be giving to you, venerable Brothers, is a symbol of the renewed bond that binds you closely to the Church and to the Pope, her visible Head.⁴ Let us listen together once again to the words of the Psalm that have just rung out: "*O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together!*" (Ps 34[33]: 4). It is an *invitation to joy and praise* which spreads in concentric circles to you, dearest Cardinals, Patriarchs, Bishops, priests, men and women religious and lay faithful. It then involves all of you, men and women of good will who look upon Christ's Church with approval. To one and all I repeat: celebrate the name of the Lord with me, for he is Father, love and mercy. For this Name, venerable Brother Cardinals, we are *called to bear witness "usque ad sanguinis effusionem"*. If at times fear or discouragement surface, may the comforting promise of the divine Teacher console us: "*In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world!*" (Jn 16: 33). Jesus clearly foretold that the *persecution* of the Apostles and their successors *would not be an extraordinary event* (cf. Mt 10: 16-18). The First Reading, in describing the capture and the miraculous release of Peter also reminded us of this.⁵ The Acts of the Apostles stresses that while Peter was in prison, "*earnest prayer for him was made to God by the Church*" (Acts 12: 5). What great courage is imbued by the support of the *unanimous prayer*

of the Christian people! I myself have been able to experience the comfort it brings. This, dear friends, is *our strength*. And it is one of the reasons why I wanted the 25th year of my Pontificate to be dedicated to the holy Rosary: to emphasize the *primacy of prayer*, and especially of *contemplative prayer*, prayed in spiritual union *with Mary, Mother of the Church*. Mary's presence - desired, invoked, accepted - also helps us to live this celebration as a moment in which the Church is renewed in the encounter with Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit. *Let us draw close to Christ, to that living stone!* as Peter told us in the Second Reading (cf. I Pt 2: 4-9). *Let us start afresh from him, from Christ*, to proclaim the miracles of his love to all, without fear or hesitation, for he assures us: "*Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world!*". Yes, Lord, we trust in you, and with you let us continue on our way at the service of the Church and of humanity! © Copyright 2003 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana

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