



The Holy See

We read in the Acts of the Apostles that after Christ's ascension into heaven and while waiting for Pentecost, all were united and persevering in prayer together with Mary, the Mother of Jesus (cf. *Acts* 1:14).

This is precisely what we are doing a few hours before the beginning of the Conclave, under the gaze of Our Lady beside the altar, in this Basilica which rises above the tomb of the Apostle Peter.

We feel united with the entire People of God in their sense of faith, love for the Pope and confident expectation.

We are here to invoke the help of the Holy Spirit, to implore his light and strength so that the Pope elected may be he whom the Church and humanity need at this difficult and complex turning point in history.

To pray, by invoking the Holy Spirit, is the only right and proper attitude to take as the Cardinal electors prepare to undertake an act of the highest human and ecclesial responsibility and to make a choice of exceptional importance. This is a human act for which every personal consideration must be set aside, keeping in mind and heart only the God of Jesus Christ and the good of the Church and of humanity.

In the Gospel that has been proclaimed, words resound that bring us to the heart of the supreme message and testament of Jesus, delivered to his Apostles on the evening of the Last Supper in the Upper Room: "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." As if to clarify this "as I have loved you," and to indicate how far our love must go, Jesus goes on to say: "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends" (*Jn* 15:13).

This is the message of love, which Jesus calls a "new" commandment. It is new because it transforms into something positive, and greatly expands, the admonition of the Old Testament that said, "Do not do to others what you would not want done to you."

The love that Jesus reveals knows no limits and must characterise the thoughts and actions of all his disciples, who must always show authentic love in their behaviour and commit themselves to

building a new civilisation, what [Paul VI](#) called the “civilisation of love.” Love is the only force capable of changing the world.

Jesus gave us an example of this love at the beginning of the Last Supper with a surprising gesture: he humbled himself in the service of others, washing the feet of the Apostles, without discrimination, and not excluding Judas, who would betray him.

This message of Jesus connects to what we heard in the first reading of the Mass, in which the prophet Isaiah reminded us that the fundamental quality of pastors is love to the point of complete self-giving.

The liturgical texts of this Eucharistic celebration, then, invite us to fraternal love, to mutual help and to commitment to ecclesial communion and universal human fraternity. Among the tasks of every successor of Peter is that of fostering communion: communion of all Christians with Christ; communion of the Bishops with the Pope; communion of the Bishops among themselves. This is not a self-referential communion, but one that is entirely directed towards communion among persons, peoples and cultures, with a concern that the Church should always be a “home and school of communion.”

This is also a strong call to maintain the unity of the Church on the path traced out by Christ to the Apostles. The unity of the Church is willed by Christ; a unity that does not mean uniformity, but a firm and profound communion in diversity, provided that full fidelity to the Gospel is maintained.

Each Pope continues to embody Peter and his mission and thus represents Christ on earth; he is the rock on which the Church is built (cf. *Mt* 16:18).

The election of the new Pope is not a simple succession of persons, yet it is always the Apostle Peter who returns.

The Cardinal electors will cast their votes in the Sistine Chapel, the place, as the Apostolic Constitution [Universi Dominici Gregis](#) states, “where everything is conducive to an awareness of the presence of God, in whose sight each person will one day be judged.”

In his *Roman Triptych*, [Pope John Paul II](#) expressed the hope that during the hours of voting on this weighty decision, Michelangelo’s looming image of Jesus the Judge would remind everyone of the greatness of the responsibility of placing the “supreme keys” (Dante) in the correct hands.

Let us pray, then, that the Holy Spirit, who in the last hundred years has given us a series of truly holy and great Pontiffs, will give us a new Pope according to God’s heart for the good of the Church and of humanity.

Let us pray that God will grant the Church a Pope who knows how best to awaken the consciences of all and the moral and spiritual energies in today's society, characterised by great technological progress but which tends to forget God.

Today's world expects much from the Church regarding the safeguarding of those fundamental human and spiritual values without which human coexistence will not be better nor bring good to future generations.

May the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, intercede with her maternal intercession, so that the Holy Spirit will enlighten the minds of the Cardinal electors and help them agree on the Pope that our time needs.