



The Holy See

ORDINARY PUBLIC CONSISTORY

FOR THE CREATION OF NEW CARDINALS

**EUCHARISTIC CONCELEBRATION WITH THE NEW CARDINALS
AND PRESENTATION OF THE CARDINAL'S RING**

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

Vatican Basilica

Solemnity of Christ the King of the Universe

Sunday, 21 November 2010

(Video)

Photo Gallery

Your Eminences,

Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and in the Priesthood,

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

On the Solemnity of Christ the King we have the joy of gathering round the Lord's altar with the 24 new Cardinals whom [I added to the College of Cardinals yesterday](#).

I first address to them my cordial greeting, which I extend to the other Cardinals and all the Prelates present, as well as to the distinguished Authorities, the Ambassadors, the priests, the religious and all the faithful who have come from various parts of the world for this happy occasion which has a distinctly universal character,

Many of you will have noticed that [the last Public Consistory for the Creation of Cardinals, held in November 2007](#), was also celebrated on the eve of the Solemnity of Christ the King. Three years have passed, thus, in accordance with the liturgical cycle for Sundays the word of God comes to us in the same Readings from Bible for this important Feast. It takes place on the last Sunday of

the liturgical year and, at the end of the itinerary of faith, presents to us the royal Face of Christ, as the *Pantocrator* in the apse of an ancient basilica.

This coincidence asks us to meditate deeply on the ministry of the Bishop of Rome and on the ministry of the Cardinals linked to it, in the light of the unique Kingship of Jesus, Our Lord.

The primary service of the Successor of Peter is that of the faith. In the New Testament, Peter becomes the “rock” of the Church insofar as he is the bearer of Faith: the “we” of the Church begins with the name of the first man who professed faith in Christ, it begins with *his* faith; a faith that was at first immature and still “too human”. Then, however, after Easter it matured and made him capable of following Christ even to the point of giving himself; it developed in the belief that Jesus is truly King; that he is so precisely because he *remained* on the Cross, and *in that way* gave his life for sinners.

In the Gospel we see that everyone asks Jesus to come down from the Cross. They mock him, but this is also a way of excusing themselves from blame as if to say: it is not our fault that you are hanging on the Cross; it is solely your fault because if you really were the Son of God, the King of the Jews, you would not stay there but would save yourself by coming down from that infamous scaffold.

Therefore, if you remain there it means that you are wrong and we are right. The tragedy that is played out beneath the Cross of Jesus is a universal tragedy; it concerns all people before God who reveals himself for what he is, namely, Love.

In the crucified Jesus the divinity is disfigured, stripped of all visible glory and yet is present and real. Faith alone can recognize it: the faith of Mary, who places in her heart too this last scene in the mosaic of her Son's life. She does not yet see the whole, but continues to trust in God, repeating once again with the same abandonment: “Behold, the handmaid of the Lord” (cf. Lk 1:38).

Then there is the faith of the Good Thief: a faith barely outlined but sufficient to assure him salvation: “Today you will be with me in Paradise” . This “with me” is crucial. Yes, it is this that saves him. Of course, the good thief is on the cross *like* Jesus, but above all he is on the Cross *with* Jesus. And, unlike the other evildoer and all those who taunt him, he does not ask Jesus to come down from the Cross nor to make him come down. Instead he says: “remember me when you come into your kingdom”.

The Good Thief sees Jesus on the Cross, disfigured and unrecognizable and yet he entrusts himself to him as to a king, indeed as to the King. The good thief believes what was written on the tablet over Jesus' head: “The King of the Jews”. He believed and entrusted himself. For this reason he was already, immediately, in the “today” of God, in Paradise, because Paradise is this:

being *with* Jesus, being *with* God.

So here, dear Brothers, is the first and fundamental message that the word of God clearly tells us today: to me, the Successor of Peter, and to you, Cardinals.

It calls us to *be with* Jesus, like Mary, and not to ask him to come down from the Cross but rather to stay there with him. And by reason of our ministry we must do this not only for ourselves but for the whole Church, for the whole People of God.

We know from the Gospels that the Cross was the critical point of the faith of Simon Peter and of the other Apostles. It is clear and it could not be otherwise: they were men and thought “according to men”; they could not tolerate the idea of a crucified Messiah.

Peter's “conversion” is fully achieved when he stops wanting “to save” Jesus and accepts to be saved by him. He gives up wanting to save Jesus from the Cross and allows Jesus' Cross to save him.

“I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail; and when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren” (Lk 22:32), the Lord says. Peter's ministry consists first of all in his faith, a faith that Jesus immediately recognizes, from the outset, as genuine, as a gift of the heavenly Father; but a faith that must pass through the scandal of the Cross to become authentic, truly “Christian”, to become a “rock” on which Jesus can build his Church.

Participation in the lordship of Christ is only brought about in practice in the sharing of his self-abasement, with the Cross. My ministry too, dear Brothers, and consequently also yours, consists wholly of faith. Jesus can build his Church on us as long as that true, Paschal faith is found in us, that faith which does not seek to make Jesus come down from the Cross but entrusts itself to him on the Cross. In this regard the true place of the Vicar of Christ is the Cross, it lies in persisting in the obedience of the Cross.

This ministry is difficult because it is not in line with the human way of thinking — with that natural logic which, moreover, continues to be active within us too. But this is and always remains our primary service, the service of faith that transforms the whole of life: believing that Jesus is God, that he is the King precisely *because* he reached that point, because he loved us to the very end.

And we must witness and proclaim this paradoxical kingship as he, the King, did, that is, by following his own way and striving to adopt his same logic, the logic of humility and service, of the ear of wheat which dies to bear fruit.

The Pope and the Cardinals are called to be profoundly united first of all in this: all together, under the guidance of the Successor of Peter, they must remain in the lordship of Christ, thinking and

working in accordance with the logic of the Cross — and this is never easy or predictable.

In this we must be united and we are, because it is not an idea or a strategy that unites us but love of Christ and his Holy Spirit. The effectiveness of our service to the Church, the Bride of Christ, depends essentially on this, on our fidelity to the divine kingship of crucified Love.

For this reason on the ring that I am consigning to you today, the seal of your nuptial covenant with the Church, is the image of the Crucifixion. And for the same reason the colour of your robe alludes to blood, the symbol of life and of love. The Blood of Christ which, according to an ancient iconography, Mary collected from the pierced side of the Son, who died on the Cross; and that the Apostle John contemplated while it gushed out with water, according to the prophetic Scriptures.

Dear Brothers, it is from this that our wisdom derives: *sapientia Crucis*. On this St Paul reflected profoundly. He was the first to outline Christian thought in an organized way, centred precisely on the paradox of the Cross (cf. 1 Cor 1:18-25; 2:1-8).

In the Letter to the Colossians, of which today's Liturgy proposes the Christological Hymn — the Pauline reflection, made fertile by the grace of the Spirit, already reaches an impressive level of synthesis in expressing an authentic Christian concept of God and of the world, of personal and universal salvation; and it is all centred on Christ, the Lord of hearts, of history and of the cosmos: "In him the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in Heaven, making peace by the blood of his Cross" (Col 1:19-20).

Dear Brothers, we are always called to proclaim this to the world: Christ "the image of the invisible God", Christ "the first-born of all creation", and "the first-born from the dead", as the Apostle writes, so "that in everything he might be pre-eminent" (Col 1:15. 18). The primacy of Peter and his Successors is totally at the service of this primacy of Jesus Christ, the one Lord; at the service of his Kingdom, that is, of his Kingship of love, so that it might come and be spread, renew men and things, transform the earth and cause peace and justice to germinate in it.

The Church fits into this plan that transcends history and, at the same time, is revealed and fulfilled in it, as the "Body" of which Christ is "the Head" (cf. Col 1:18).

In the Letter to the Ephesians, St Paul speaks explicitly of the lordship of Christ and sets it in relation to the Church. He formulates a prayer of praise to the "greatness of the power of God" who raised Christ and made him the universal Lord and concludes, "and he [God] has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the Church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all" (Eph 1:22-23).

Here, Paul attributes to the Church the very word "fullness", which applies to Christ, for participation: the body, in fact, participates in the fullness of the Head. This, Venerable Brother

Cardinals — and I am also addressing all of you who share with us the grace of being Christian — this is what our joy is: participating, in the Church in the fullness of Christ through the obedience of the Cross, of being qualified “to share in the inheritance of the saints in light”, of being “transferred” to the Kingdom of the Son of God (cf. Col 1:12-13).

For this reason we live in perennial thanksgiving, and even in trials do not lack the joy and peace that Christ bequeathed to us as a guarantee of his Kingdom which already exists among us, who wait with faith and hope, and of which we have a foretaste in love. Amen.

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