



The Holy See

MASS AND DEDICATION
OF THE NEW PARISH OF ST CORBINIAN AT INFERNETTO (ROME)

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

Sunday, 20 March 2011

[\(Video\)](#)

[Photo Gallery](#)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I am very pleased to be with you to celebrate an event as important as the Dedication to God and to the service of the community of this church called after St Corbinian. Providence has ordained that our meeting take place on the Second Sunday of Lent, distinguished by the Gospel of the Transfiguration of Jesus.

Today, we therefore have the juxtaposition of two elements, both of which are very important: on the one hand, the mystery of the Transfiguration, and on the other, that of the temple, that is, of God's house amidst your houses. The Bible Readings we have heard were chosen to illustrate these two aspects.

The Transfiguration. The Evangelist Matthew has told us what happened when Jesus, taking with him three of his disciples — Peter, James and John — climbed a high mountain. While they were up there, on their own, Jesus' face, and likewise his garments, became radiant. This is what we call "Transfiguration": a luminous, comforting mystery. What is its meaning? The Transfiguration is a revelation of the Person of Jesus, of his profound reality.

In fact, the eye witnesses of the event, that is, the three Apostles, were enfolded in a cloud, also bright — which in the Bible always heralds God's presence — and they heard a voice saying:

“This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him” (Mt 17:5). This event prepared the disciples for the Paschal Mystery of Jesus: to endure the terrible trial of the Passion and also to understand properly the luminous event of the Resurrection.

The narrative also speaks of Moses and Elijah who appear and talk with Jesus. Actually, this episode is related to another two divine revelations. Moses climbed Mount Sinai and there received God’s revelation. He asked God to show him his glory but God answered Moses that he would not see his face but only his back (*cf.* Ex 33:18-23)

God made a similar revelation to Elijah on the mountain: a more intimate manifestation, not accompanied by a storm, an earthquake or by fire, but by a gentle breeze (*cf.* 1 Kings 19:11-13).

Unlike these two episodes, in the Transfiguration it is not Jesus who receives the revelation of God; rather, it is precisely in Jesus that God reveals himself and reveals his face to the Apostles. Thus, those who wish to know God must contemplate the face of Jesus, his face transfigured: Jesus is the perfect revelation of the Father’s holiness and mercy.

Let us also remember that on Mount Sinai Moses also received the revelation of God’s will: the Ten Commandments. And, again, it was on the mountain that Elijah received from God the divine Revelation of a mission he was to undertake.

Jesus, on the contrary, did not receive the revelation of what he was to do: he already knew it. Rather it was the Apostles who heard God’s voice in the cloud, commanding: “Listen to him”.

God’s will was fully revealed in the Person of Jesus. Anyone who wants to live in accordance with God’s will must follow Jesus, listen to him and accept his words, and with the help of the Holy Spirit, acquire a deep knowledge of them. This is the first invitation I wish to offer you, dear friends, with great affection: grow in the knowledge and love of Christ, both as individuals and as a parish community, encounter him in the Eucharist, in listening to his word, in prayer and in charity.

The second point is the Church as a building and especially as a community. Before reflecting, however, on the Dedication of your church, I would like to tell you that my joy at being with you today is enhanced for a special reason. Indeed, St Corbinian founded the Diocese of Freising, Bavaria, of which I was Bishop for four years. In my episcopal coat of arms I chose to insert an element closely associated with this Saint’s history: a bear.

It is said that a bear had torn St Corbinian’s horse to pieces while the Saint was on his way to Rome. He harshly reprimanded it, succeeded in taming it and on its back loaded his baggage which had so far been carried by the horse. The bear bore this burden as far as Rome and only then did the Saint set it free.

Perhaps this is the point at which to say a few words about the life of St Corbinian. St Corbinian was French. He was a priest from the region of Paris, not far from which he had founded a monastery for himself. He was held in high esteem as a spiritual counselor but was more inclined to contemplation and therefore came to Rome to build a monastery here, close to the tombs of the Apostles Peter and Paul.

However Pope Gregory II — it was in about the year 720 — had founded a monastery nearby — thought highly of his qualities, had understood his qualities and ordained him a Bishop, charging him to go to Bavaria and to proclaim the Gospel in that land. Bavaria: the Pope was thinking of the country between the Danube and the Alps which had been the Roman Province of Raetia for 500 years. Only at the end of the fifth century did the majority of the Latin population return to Italy.

A few simple people had stayed there. The land was sparsely populated and a new people settled in it, the Bavarian people which, because the Country had been Christianized in the Roman period, discovered there a Christian heritage. The Bavarian people had understood straight away that this was the true religion and wanted to become Christian. However, there was a lack of educated people and priests to preach the Gospel.

And so Christianity had remained very fragmented, in its early stages. The Pope knew of this situation, he knew of the thirst for faith that existed in that country. He thus charged St Corbinian to go there and proclaim the Gospel there. And in Freising, in the ducal city on the hilltop, the Saint built the Cathedral — there was already a Shrine to Our Lady — and the Bishops See remained there for more than 1,000 years.

Only after the Napoleonic period was it transferred to Munich, 30 kilometres further south. It is still called the “Diocese of Munich and Freising”, and Freising’s majestic Romanesque cathedral has remained the heart of the diocese. So we see that saints uphold the Church’s unity and universality.

Universality: St Corbinian connects France, Germany and Rome. Unity: St Corbinian tells us that the Church is founded on Peter and guarantees to us that the Church founded on the rock will endure for ever. One thousand years ago she was the same Church that she is today, because the Lord is always the same. He is always Truth, ever old and ever new, very up to date, present, and the key opening the future.

I would now like to thank all who have contributed to building this church. I know how hard the Diocese of Rome is working to ensure every neighbourhood suitable parish complexes.

I greet and thank the Cardinal Vicar, the Auxiliary Bishop of the Sector and the Bishop Secretary of the “Opera Romana” (Roman institution) for the preservation of faith and the provision of new churches. I greet in particular my two successors. I greet Cardinal Wetter, who conceived the

initiative of dedicating a parish church to St Corbinian and provided effective support for the project's realization. Thank you, Your Eminence, many thanks. I am glad that the church was built so quickly.

I greet Cardinal Marx, the current Archbishop of Munich and Freising, who feels love not only for St Corbinian but also for his Church in Rome. My cordial thanks to you too. I also greet Bishop Clemens, from the Diocese of Paderborn who is Secretary of the Council for the Laity. I extend a special thought to the parish priest, Fr Antonio Magnotta, with my sincere gratitude for your words to me. Thank you! and of course I also greet the parochial vicar!

Through all of you present here, I would like to extend a word of affectionate closeness to the approximately 10,000 residents in the Parish territory. Gathered round the Eucharist, we more easily note that the mission of every Christian community is to take the message of God's love to everyone, to make everyone know his face. This is why it is important that the Eucharist always be the heart of the life of the faithful, as it is today for your Parish, although not all its members have been able to take part in person.

Today we are living an important day which crowns the efforts, exertions and sacrifices made by and the commitment of the local people to form a mature Christian community that now has a Church, now definitively consecrated, in which to worship God.

I rejoice that this goal has been achieved and I am sure that it will encourage the gathering and the development of the family of believers in this district. The Church wishes to be present in every neighbourhood in which people live and work, with the Gospel witness of consistent and faithful Christians, but also with appropriate premises for prayer gatherings and for the sacraments, Christian formation and the beginning of friendships and brotherhood, helping children, young people, families and the elderly grow in the spirit of community which Christ taught us and of which the Church stands in such great need.

Just as the parish premises were built, my Visit is intended to encourage you to build ever better the Church of living stones which you are. We heard in the Second Reading "You are God's field, God's building", St Paul wrote to the Corinthians (1 Cor 3:9) and to us. And he urges us to build on the one true foundation which is Jesus Christ (3:11).

For this reason, I also urge you to make your new church the place where one learns how to listen to the word of God, the permanent "school" of Christian prayer from which stems every activity of this young and committed parish.

The text from the Book of Nehemiah, presented in the First Reading, is enlightening in this respect. There it can be clearly seen that Israel is the people convoked to listen to the word of God, written in the book of the Law. This book is read solemnly by the ministers and explained to

the people who, standing, raise their hands to Heaven then kneel and prostrate themselves, face to the ground, in a sign of adoration. It is a true liturgy enlivened by faith in God who speaks, by repentance for infidelity to the Lord's Law, and especially by joy — for the proclamation of his word is a sign that he has not abandoned his People, that he is close. May you too, dear brothers and sisters, in gathering to listen to the word of God with faith and perseverance, become, from one Sunday to the next, a Church of God, inwardly formed and fashioned by his Word. What a great gift this is! May you always be grateful for it.

Yours is a young community, consisting largely of newly married couples who have come to live in the neighbourhood; there are many children and young people. I know the dedication and attention that are given to families and to the guidance of young couples: may you be able to start a pastoral service for families, marked by open and cordial hospitality to the new family nuclei, which will be able to foster reciprocal knowledge, so that the parish community may always be, increasingly, a "family of families" able to share with them, alongside the joys, the inevitable initial difficulties.

I also know that various groups of the faithful meet to pray, learning at the school of the Gospel, to participate in the Sacraments and to live that essential dimension for Christian life which is charity. I am thinking of all those who with the Parish *Caritas* seek to meet the many needs in the area, especially by responding to the expectations of the poorest and neediest people.

I rejoice in all you do to prepare children and young people for the sacraments of Christian life, and I urge you to take an increasing interest in their parents too, especially those who have small children; the Parish is striving to propose to them too, at convenient times and in suitable ways, prayer and formation meetings, especially for the parents of children who must receive Baptism and the other sacraments of Christian initiation.

May you also treat with special care and attention families in difficulty or in an irregular or precarious condition. Do not leave them on their own, but be lovingly close to them, helping them to understand God's authentic plan for marriage and the family.

The Pope wishes to address a special word of affection and friendship also to you, dear children and young people who are listening to me, and to your peers who live in this parish. The present and the future of the ecclesial and civil community are entrusted in a special way to you. The Church expects much from your enthusiasm, from your ability to look ahead and from your wish for firm in the choices in life.

Dear friends of San Corbiniano! The Lord Jesus Christ who led the Apostles to the mountain to pray and showed them his glory, has invited us to this new church today. Here we can listen to him, we can recognize his presence in the breaking of the Eucharist Bread; and in this way become a living Church, a temple of the Holy Spirit, a sign of God's love in the world.

Go home with your hearts full of this gratitude and joy, because you are part of this great spiritual building which is the Church. Let us entrust our Lenten journey, and that of the entire Church to the Virgin Mary. May Our Lady, who followed her Son Jesus to the Cross, help us to be faithful disciples of Christ, so that we may be able to take part together with her in the joy of Easter. Amen.

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