



The Holy See

FAREWELL ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE BENEDICT XVI TO THE EMINENT CARDINALS PRESENT IN ROME

*Clementine Hall
Thursday, 28 February 2013*

[\[Video\]](#)

Venerable and Dear Brothers,

I welcome you with great joy and I offer each one of you my most cordial greeting. I thank Cardinal Angelo Sodano who, as always, interpreted the sentiments of the entire College: *Cor ad cor loquitur* [heart speaks to heart] I warmly thank you, Your Eminence. And I would like to say — taking up your reference to the disciples of Emmaus — that for me too it has been a joy to walk with you in these years, in the light of the presence of the Risen Lord.

As I said yesterday to the thousands of faithful who filled St Peter's Square, your closeness and your advice have been of great help to me in my ministry. In these eight years we have lived with faith very beautiful moments of radiant light on the Church's journey, as well as moments when several clouds gathered in the sky. We sought to serve Christ and his Church with profound and total love, which is the heart and soul of our ministry. We gave hope, the hope that comes to us from Christ, which alone can give light to us on our journey. Together we may thank the Lord who has enabled us to grow in communion and, together, pray him to help us to grow even more in this profound unity, so that the College of Cardinals may be like an orchestra where differences — an expression of the universal Church — contribute to a superior and harmonious concord.

I would like to leave you a simple thought, which is deep in my heart: a thought about the Church, about her mystery, that constitutes for us all — we can say — the reason and passion for life.

I will allow a sentence of Romano Guardini to help me. It was written in the very same year that

the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council approved the Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, in his last book, which also a personal dedication to me — which makes the words of this book particularly dear to me. Guardini says the Church “is not an institution conceived and built in theory... but a living reality.... She lives through the course of time, in becoming, like every living being, in undergoing change.... And yet in her nature she remains ever the same and her heart is Christ”.

It seems to me that this was our experience yesterday in the Square: seeing that the Church is a living body, enlivened by the Holy Spirit and which is really brought to life by God’s power. She is in the world but not of the world: she is of God, of Christ, of the Spirit. We saw this yesterday. That is why Guardini's other famous saying is both true and eloquent: “The Church is reawakened in souls”. The Church is alive, she grows and is reawakened in souls who — like the Virgin Mary — welcome the Word of God and conceive it through the action of the Holy Spirit; they offer to God their own flesh. It is precisely in their poverty and humility that they become capable of begetting Christ in the world today. Through the Church, the Mystery of the Incarnation lives on for ever. Christ continues to walk through the epochs and in all places.

Let us stay united, dear Brothers, in this Mystery: in prayer, especially in the daily Eucharist, and in this way we shall serve the Church and the whole of humanity. This is our joy that no one can take from us.

Before I say goodbye to each one of you personally, I would like to tell you that I shall continue to be close to you with my prayers, especially in these coming days, that you may be completely docile to the action of the Holy Spirit in the election of the new pope. May the Lord show you the one whom he wants. And among you, in the College of Cardinals, there is also the future pope to whom today I promise my unconditional reverence and obedience. For this reason, with affection and gratitude, I cordially impart to you the Apostolic Blessing.