



The Holy See

PASTORAL VISIT OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE SUBURBICARIAN DIOCESE OF VELLETRI-SEGNI

EUCCHARISTIC CONCELEBRATION

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

St Clement's Square
Sunday, 23 September 2007

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I willingly return among you to preside at this solemn Eucharistic celebration, responding to one of your repeated invitations. I have come back with joy to meet your diocesan community, which for several years has been mine, too, in a special way, and is always dear to me. I greet you all with affection. In the first place, I greet Cardinal Francis Arinze who has succeeded me as titular Cardinal of this Diocese; I greet your Pastor, dear Bishop Vincenzo Apicella, whom I thank for his beautiful words of welcome with which he has desired to greet me in your name. I greet the other Bishops, priests and men and women religious, the pastoral workers, young people and all who are actively involved in parishes, movements, associations and the various diocesan activities. I greet the Commissioner of the Prefecture of Velletri-Segni and the other civil and military Authorities who honour us with their presence. I greet all those who have come from other places, in particular from Bavaria, from Germany, to join us on this festive day. Bonds of friendship bind my native Land to yours, as is testified by the bronze pillar presented to me in Markt am Inn in September last year on the occasion of [my Apostolic Visit to Germany](#). As has been said, 100 municipalities of Bavaria have recently given me, as it were, a "twin" of that pillar which will be set up here in Velletri as a further sign of my affection and goodwill. It will be the sign of my spiritual presence among you. In this regard, I would like to thank the donors, the sculptor and the mayors whom I see present here with numerous friends. I thank you all!

Dear brothers and sisters, I know that you have prepared for my Visit today with an intense spiritual itinerary, adopting a very important verse of John's First Letter as your motto: "We know and believe the love God has for us" (4: 16). *Deus caritas est*, God is love: [my first Encyclical](#) begins with these words that concern the core of our faith: the Christian image of God and the consequent image of man and his journey. I rejoice that you have chosen these very words to guide you on the spiritual and pastoral journey of the Diocese: "We know and believe the love God has for us". We have believed in love: this is the essence of Christianity. Therefore, our liturgical assembly today must focus on this essential truth, on the love of God, capable of impressing an absolutely new orientation and value on human life. Love is the essence of Christianity, which makes the believer and the Christian community a leaven of hope and peace in every environment and especially attentive to the needs of the poor and needy. This is our common mission: to be a leaven of hope and peace because we believe in love. Love makes the Church live, and since it is eternal it makes her live for ever, to the end of time.

Last Sunday, St Luke the Evangelist, who was more concerned than others to show Jesus' love for the poor, offered us various ideas for reflection on the danger of an excessive attachment to money, to material goods and to all that prevents us from living to the full our vocation to love God and neighbour. Today too, through a parable that inspires in us a certain surprise since it speaks of a dishonest steward who is praised (cf. Lk 16: 1-13), a close look reveals that here the Lord has reserved a serious and particularly salutary teaching for us. As always, the Lord draws inspiration from the events of daily life: he tells of a steward who is on the point of being dismissed for dishonest management of his master's affairs and who, to assure a future for himself, cunningly seeks to come to an arrangement with his master's debtors. He is undoubtedly dishonest but clever: the Gospel does not present him to us as a model to follow in his dishonesty, but rather as an example to be imitated for his farsighted guile. The short parable ends, in fact, with these words: "The master commended the dishonest steward for his prudence" (Lk 16: 8).

But what does Jesus wish to tell us with this parable? And with its surprising conclusion? The Evangelist follows the parable of the dishonest steward with a short series of sayings and recommendations on the relationship we must have with money and the goods of this earth. These short sentences are an invitation to a choice that presupposes a radical decision, a constant inner tension. Life is truly always a choice: between honesty and dishonesty, between fidelity and infidelity, between selfishness and altruism, between good and evil. The conclusion of this Gospel passage is incisive and peremptory: "No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other". Ultimately, Jesus says, "You cannot serve God and mammon" (Lk 16: 13). *Mammon* is a term of Phoenician origin that calls to mind economic security and success in business; we might say that riches are shown as the idol to which everything is sacrificed in order to attain one's own material success; hence, this economic success becomes a person's true god. As a result, it is necessary to make a fundamental decision between God and mammon, it is necessary to choose between the logic of profit as the ultimate criterion for our action, and the logic of sharing and solidarity. If

the logic of profit prevails, it widens the gap between the poor and the rich, as well as increasing the ruinous exploitation of the planet. On the other hand, when the logic of sharing and solidarity prevails, it is possible to correct the course and direct it to a fair development for the common good of all. Basically, it is a matter of choosing between selfishness and love, between justice and dishonesty and ultimately, between God and Satan. If loving Christ and one's brethren is not to be considered as something incidental and superficial but, rather, the true and ultimate purpose of our whole existence, it will be necessary to know how to make basic choices, to be prepared to make radical renouncements, if necessary even to the point of martyrdom. Today, as yesterday, Christian life demands the courage to go against the tide, to love like Jesus, who even went so far as to sacrifice himself on the Cross.

We could then say, paraphrasing one of St Augustine's thoughts, that through earthly riches we must procure for ourselves those true and eternal riches: indeed, if people exist who are prepared to resort to every type of dishonesty to assure themselves an always unpredictable material well-being, how much more concerned we Christians must be to provide for our eternal happiness with the goods of this earth (cf. *Discourses*, 359, 10). Now, the only way of bringing our personal talents and abilities and the riches we possess to fruition for eternity is to share them with our brethren, thereby showing that we are good stewards of what God entrusts to us. Jesus said: "He who is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and he who is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much" (Lk 16: 10).

Today, in the First Reading, the Prophet Amos speaks of the same fundamental decision to be made day by day. Using strong words, he stigmatizes a lifestyle typical of those who allow themselves to be absorbed by a selfish quest for profit in every possible form and which is expressed in the thirst for gain, contempt for the poor and their exploitation, to one's own advantage (cf. Am 8: 5). The Christian must energetically reject all this, opening his heart on the contrary to sentiments of authentic generosity. It must be generosity which, as the Apostle Paul exhorts in the Second Reading, is expressed in sincere love for all and is manifested in prayer. Actually, praying for others is a great act of charity. The Apostle invites us in the first place to pray for those who have tasks of responsibility in the civil community because, he explains, if they aspire to do good, positive consequences derive from their decisions, assuring peace and "a quiet and peaceable life, godly and respectful in every way" (I Tm 2: 2). Thus, may our prayer never be lacking, a spiritual contribution to building an Ecclesial Community that is faithful to Christ and to the construction of a society in which there is greater justice and solidarity.

Dear brothers and sisters, let us pray in particular that your diocesan community, which is undergoing a series of transformations due to the transfer of many young families from Rome to the development of the "service sector" and to the settlement of many immigrants in historical centres, may lead to an increasingly organic and shared pastoral action, following the instructions that your Bishop continues to give you with outstanding pastoral sensitivity. His Pastoral Letter of last December proved more timely than ever in this regard, with the invitation to listen with

attention and perseverance to God's Word, to the teachings of the Second Vatican Council and to the Church's Magisterium. Let us place your every intention and pastoral project in the hands of Our Lady of Grace, whose image is preserved and venerated in your beautiful Cathedral. May Mary's maternal protection accompany the journey of you who are present here and all those who have been unable to participate in our Eucharistic celebration today. May the Holy Virgin watch over the sick, the elderly, children, everyone who feels lonely or neglected or who is in particular need. May Mary deliver us from the greed for riches and ensure that in raising to Heaven hands that are free and pure, we may glorify God with our whole life (cf. *Collect*). Amen!

© Copyright 2007 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana

Copyright © Dicastero per la Comunicazione - Libreria Editrice Vaticana