



The Holy See

ORDINARY PUBLIC CONSISTORY FOR THE CREATION OF NEW CARDINALS

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

Vatican Basilica
Saturday, 20 November 2010

[\(Video\)](#)

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Your Eminences,
Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and in the Priesthood,
Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Once again the Lord has granted me the joy of carrying out this solemn act by which the College of Cardinals is enriched with new Members chosen from every part of the world. They are Pastors who zealously govern important Diocesan communities and Prelates who head Dicasteries of the Roman Curia or who have served the Church and the Holy See with exemplary faithfulness.

As from today, they are part of that *coetus peculiaris* which gives the Successor of Peter a more immediate and diligent collaboration, supporting him in the exercise of his universal ministry,

First of all I address my affectionate greeting, renewing the expression of my esteem and my deep appreciation to them for their witness to the Church and to the world. In particular, I greet Archbishop Angelo Amato and thank him for his kind words to me.

I then offer a cordial welcome to the Official Delegations of various countries, to the Representatives of numerous dioceses and to all who have gathered here to take part in this event during which these venerable and dear Brothers receive the sign of cardinalitial dignity by the imposition of the biretta [“red hat”], and the assignment of the Title of a church in Rome.

The special communion and affection that bonds these new Cardinals to the Pope makes them his unique and precious cooperators in the lofty mandate to tend his sheep, which Christ entrusted to Peter (*cf.* Jn 21:15-17) in order to unite peoples with the solicitude of Christ's love. From this same love the Church was born, called to live and to journey on in accordance with the Lord's commandment which sums up the whole of the law and the prophets.

Being united with Christ in faith and in communion with him means being “rooted and grounded in love” (Eph 3:17), the fabric that unites all the members of Christ's Body.

The word of God proclaimed just now helps us to meditate exactly on this most fundamental aspect. The Gospel passage (Mk 10:32-45) sets before our eyes the icon of Jesus as the Messiah — foretold by Isaiah (*cf.* Isaiah 53) — who came not to be served but to serve. His lifestyle becomes the basis of new relationships within the Christian community and of a new way of exercising authority.

Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem and for the third time, pointing it out to the disciples, predicts the way on which he intends to bring to fulfillment the work entrusted to him by the Father: the way of giving himself humbly, to the point of sacrificing his life, the way of the Passion, the way of the Cross.

Yet, even after this announcement, as had happened for the previous ones, the disciples revealed their great difficulty in understanding, in bringing about the necessary “exodus” from a worldly mind set to the mentality of God.

Such was the case of James and John, the two sons of Zebedee, who ask Jesus to grant them to sit in the places of honour, beside him in “glory”, thus expressing worldly expectations and projects of grandeur, authority and honour.

Jesus, who knows the human heart, is not upset by this request but immediately turns the limelight on its profound implications: “you do not know what you are asking”. He then guides the two brothers to an understanding of what following him means.

So what is the way that any one who wishes to be a disciple must take? It is the way of the Teacher, it is the way of total obedience to God. For this reason Jesus asks James and John: are you prepared to share my decision to carry out the Father's will to the very end? Are you prepared to take this way that passes through humiliation, suffering and death for love? The two disciples, with their confident answer, “we can”, show that once again they have not understood the real meaning of what the Teacher is outlining for them.

And again Jesus patiently helps them take a further step: not even experiencing the cup of suffering and the baptism of death entitles a person to the first place, because the first place is “for

those for whom it has been prepared”, it is in the hands of the Heavenly Father. Human beings must not calculate; they must simply abandon themselves to God without making any claims, conforming themselves to his will.

The indignation of the other disciples became an opportunity to extend the teaching to the entire community. Jesus first “called them to him”: this was the act of the original vocation to which he invited them to return.

His reference to the constitutive moment of the calling of the Twelve, to “being with Jesus” in order to be sent out is very significant, because it clearly recalls that every ministry in the Church is always a response to a call of God, never the result of one's own project or personal ambition but, rather, means conforming one's will to the will of the Father who is in Heaven, as Christ did in Gethsemane (*cf.* Lk 22:42).

No one is master in the Church but all are called, all are sent out, all are reached and guided by divine grace. And this is also our security! Only by listening anew to the word of Jesus who asks, “come, follow me”, only by returning to our original vocation, is it possible to understand our own presence and mission in the Church as authentic disciples.

The request of James and John and the indignation of the other “ten” Apostles raised a central question to which Jesus chose to answer: who is great, who is “first” for God? First of all Jesus looks at behaviour which “those who are supposed to rule over the Gentiles” risk assuming: to “lord it over them”.

Jesus points out to the disciples a completely different conduct. “But it shall not be so among you”. His community follows another rule, another logic, another model: “Whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all”.

The criterion of greatness and primacy according to God is not domination but service; *diaconia* is the fundamental law of the disciple and of the Christian community, and lets us glimpse something about “the lordship of God”.

And Jesus also indicates the reference point: the Son of man who came to serve. In other words he sums up his mission in the category of service, not meant in a generic sense but in the concrete sense of the Cross, of the total gift of life as a “ransom”, as redemption for many, and he points it out as a condition of the “sequela”.

It is a message that applies for the Apostles, for the whole Church, and especially for those who have leadership roles in the People of God. It is not the logic of domination, of power according to human criteria but rather the logic of bending down to wash feet, the logic of service, the logic of the Cross that is the root of all exercise of authority.

The Church in every period is committed to conforming to this logic and to testifying to it to make the true “lordship of God” shine out, that of love.

Venerable Brothers appointed to the cardinalial dignity, the mission to which God calls you today and which qualifies you for an even more responsible ecclesial service, requires an ever greater willingness to adopt the style of the Son of God who came among us as one who serves (*cf.* Lk 22:25-27).

It is a question of following him in his humble and total gift of himself to the Church, his Bride, on the Cross. It is on this wood that the grain of wheat — which the Father let fall into the earth of the world — dies, in order to become a ripe fruit.

This is why it is necessary to be even more deeply and firmly rooted in Christ. The intimate relationship with him that transforms life increasingly in such a way that it is possible to say with St Paul, “it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me” (Gal 2:20), constitutes the primary requirement if our service is to be serene and joyful and to bear the fruit that the Lord expects of us.

Dear Brothers and Sisters who are gathered round the new Cardinals today: pray for them! Tomorrow, in this Basilica, during the concelebration on the Solemnity of Christ the King, I shall present the ring to them. It will be a further opportunity to “praise the Lord... who keeps faith for ever” (Ps 145[144]), as we said in the Responsorial Psalm.

May his Spirit support the new Cardinals in their commitment of service to the Church, following Christ on the Cross and also, if necessary, *usque ad effusionem sanguinis*, ever ready to respond to whoever may ask us to account for the hope that is in us, as St Peter said in the Reading (*cf.* 1 Pt 3:15).

I entrust the new Cardinals and their ecclesial service to Mary, Mother of the Church, so that they may proclaim to all the peoples, with apostolic zeal, the merciful love of God. Amen.