



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI TO THE MEMBERS OF THE COLLEGE OF CARDINALS

*Clementine Hall
Friday, 22 April 2005*

Venerable Brother Cardinals,

1. I am also meeting you today and I would like to tell you in a simple, brotherly way of the state of mind that I am experiencing in these days. The intense emotions that I felt on the occasion of the death of my Venerable Predecessor John Paul II and then during the Conclave, and especially at its conclusion, amount to a deep need for silence and two complementary sentiments: a profound, heartfelt desire to give thanks and a feeling of human powerlessness as I face the lofty task that awaits me.

First of all, gratitude. I feel it my duty, in the first place, to thank God who wanted me, despite my human frailty, as the Successor of the Apostle Peter, and has entrusted to me the task of governing and guiding the Church so that she may be the sacrament of unity in the world for the entire human race (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, n. 1). We are certain: it is the eternal Pastor who leads his flock with the power of his Spirit and assures it in every age to the Pastors whom he has chosen. In these days, the Christian people have prayed in unison for the new Pontiff, and my first Meeting with the faithful in the evening of the day before yesterday in St Peter's Square was truly moving: to everyone, Bishops, priests, men and women Religious, young people and the elderly, I extend my most heartfelt gratitude for their spiritual solidarity.

2. I feel I owe deep thanks to each one of you, Venerable Brothers, beginning with Cardinal Angelo Sodano, who has just expressed affection and cordial good wishes to me on behalf of you all. With him I thank the Camerlengo, Cardinal Eduardo Martínez Somalo, for his generous service

in this sensitive period of passage.

I would next like to extend my sincere gratitude to all the members of the College of Cardinals for their active collaboration in the management of the Church during the Vacant See. I would like to greet with special affection the Cardinals who were prevented by age or illness from taking part in the Conclave. I am grateful to each one for your example of availability and fraternal communion as well as for your intense prayers, both of which are expressions of faithful love for the Church, the Bride of Christ.

In addition, I cannot fail to address my heartfelt thanks to all those, in their different capacities, who cooperated in the organization and unfolding of the Conclave and helped the Cardinals in many ways to spend these days laden with responsibility in the safest and most tranquil manner.

3. Venerable Brothers, I owe you my most personal gratitude for the trust you have placed in me by electing me Bishop of Rome and Pastor of the universal Church. It is an act of trust that encourages me to undertake this new mission more serenely, for I am convinced that in addition to God's indispensable help I can also count on your generous collaboration. Please never let me lack your support!

If on the one hand I am aware of my personal limitations and limited abilities, on the other hand I well know the nature of the mission entrusted to me and am preparing myself to carry it out with an attitude of inner dedication. It is not a matter of honours but of a service to be rendered with simplicity and willingness, imitating our Teacher and Lord who did not come to be served but to serve (cf. Mt 20: 28), and at the Last Supper washed the Apostles' feet, commanding them to do likewise (cf. Jn 13: 13-14). It only remains for me, and for all of us together, to accept from Providence the will of God and to do our best to measure up to it, helping one another to carry out our respective tasks in the service of the Church.

4. I would like at this moment to think back to my Venerable Predecessors, Bl. John XXIII, the Servants of God Paul VI and John Paul I, and especially John Paul II, whose witness in his last days gave us more support than ever and whose lively presence we still continue to feel. The sorrowful event of his death, after a period of great trials and suffering, proved to have the paschal features for which he had expressed the hope in his Testament (24 February-1 March 1980). The light and strength of the Risen Christ shone out in the Church from that sort of "last Mass" that he celebrated in his agony, which culminated in the "Amen" of a life entirely offered, through the Immaculate Heart of Mary, for the world's salvation.

5. Venerable Brothers! Each one of you will now be returning to your respective Sees to resume your work, but spiritually we will remain united in the faith and love of the Lord, in the bond of the Eucharistic celebration, in persistent prayer and in the sharing of our daily apostolic ministry. Your spiritual closeness, your enlightened advice and your effective cooperation will be a gift for me for

which I will always be grateful and an incentive to fulfil the mandate entrusted to me with total fidelity and dedication.

I entrust all of us and the expectations, hopes and worries of the entire community of Christians to the Virgin Mother of God, who accompanied the steps of the newborn Church with her silent presence and comforted the faith of the Apostles. I ask you to walk under the motherly protection of Mary, *Mater Ecclesiae*, docile and obedient to the voice of her divine Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ. As I call upon her constant patronage, I impart to each one of you and to all those whom divine Providence entrusts to your pastoral care my heartfelt Apostolic Blessing.

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