



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO MÜNCHEN, ALTÖTTING AND REGENSBURG
(SEPTEMBER 9-14, 2006)

***GREETING OF THE HOLY FATHER
BEFORE THE MARIENSÄULE***

*Marienplatz, München
Saturday, 9 September 2006*

*Madam Chancellor and Mr Prime Minister,
My Brother Cardinals, Bishops and Priests,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Brothers and Sisters!*

It is very moving for me to stand once more in this beautiful square at the foot of the *Mariensäule* – in a place which, as was already pointed out, has witnessed two other decisive turning-points in my life. Here, as it was said, thirty years ago the faithful gave me a very warm welcome, and I entrusted to the Virgin Mary the path that lay ahead of me, since the move from a university chair to the ministry of Archbishop of Munich and Freising was a big step, and only with such protection and the palpable affection of the people of Munich and Bavaria could I hope to take up that ministry as the successor of Cardinal Döpfner. Then, again in 1982, I bade farewell here. Archbishop, later Cardinal, Hamer, the Archbishop of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith was present, and he remarked: “The people of Munich are like the people of Naples: they want to touch their Archbishop and they love him”. He was amazed to see such warmth here in Munich, and to encounter the Bavarian heart in this place, where once more I entrusted myself to the Virgin.

I thank your, distinguished and dear Mr Minister President, for your cordial words of welcome in the name of the Bavarian government and people. I also offer a heartfelt thanks to my dear

successor as Pastor of the Archdiocese of Munich and Freising, Cardinal Friedrich Wetter, for his warm words of greeting. I greet Madam Chancellor, Dr Angela Merkel, and all the political, civil and military authorities taking part in this ceremony of welcome and prayer. I would like to offer a special greeting to the priests, especially those with whom I was able to work in my home Diocese of Munich and Freising. But I wish to greet all of you, my dear compatriots assembled in this square, with great heartfelt gratitude and affection. I thank you for your warm Bavarian welcome, and I thank, as I have already done at the airport, all those who helped to prepare this visit are now working so that everything will go so smoothly.

I hope you will allow me to recall on this occasion a few thoughts which I set down in my brief memoirs with regard to my appointment as Archbishop of Munich and Freising. I was to become, and did become, the successor of Saint Corbinian. From my childhood I was very much taken with the story that a bear had attacked and killed the horse on the saint was riding across the Alps. Corbinian severely scolded the bear and he punished him by loading him down with all his baggage and making him carry it all the way to Rome. So the bear, carrying the baggage of the saint, had to go to Rome, and only there was he allowed by the saint to go free.

In 1977, when I had to face the difficult choice of whether or not to accept my appointment as Archbishop of Munich and Freising, knowing that it would take me away from my usual work at the university and mean new work and new responsibilities, I had to do a lot of reflecting. And precisely then I remembered this bear and the interpretation of verses 22 and 23 of Psalm 73 that Saint Augustine, in a situation much like my own and in the context of his own priestly and episcopal ordination, had come up with and later set down in his sermons on the Psalms. In Psalm 73, the Psalmist asks why in this world good things often happen to bad people, while bad things happen to many good people. And he goes on to say: "I was foolish in my thinking, I stood in your presence like a dumb beast. But then I entered the sanctuary and I understood how even amid my troubles I was close to you and that you were always with me". Augustine loved this Psalm and often made reference to it, seeing in the words "I stood in your presence like a dumb beast" (in Latin, *iumentum*) a reference to the beasts of burden used in North Africa to work the land. In this *iumentum* he saw an image of himself as a beast of burden for God, someone burdened by his responsibility, the *sarcina episcopalis*. He had chosen the life of a scholar and God had called him to become a "beast of burden", a sturdy ox drawing the plough in God's field, doing the heavy labour assigned to him. But he came to realize: just as the beast of burden is very close to the farmer, working under his direction, so I am very close to God, because thus I serve him directly for the building up of his Kingdom, the the building up of his Church.

With these words of the Bishop of Hippo in mind, I have found in Saint Corbinian's bear a constant encouragement to carry out my ministry with confidence and joy – thirty years ago, and again now in my new task – and to say my daily "yes" to God: I have become for you a beast of burden, but as such "I am always with you" (*Ps 73:23*). Saint Corbinian's bear was set free in Rome. In my case, the Lord decided otherwise. And so I find myself once more at the foot of the *Mariensäule*,

imploing the intercession and blessing of the Mother of God, not only for the city of Munich and for my beloved Bavaria, but for the universal Church and for all people of good will.

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