



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE MEMBERS OF THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL
FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE ON THE FIFTH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE DEATH OF CARD. FRANÇOIS-XAVIER NGUYÊN VAN THUÂN***

Castel Gandolfo

Monday, 17 September 2007

*Your Eminence,
Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and in the Priesthood,
Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

I address a cordial welcome to all of you, gathered to remember beloved Cardinal François-Xavier Nguyễn Van Thuân, whom the Lord called to himself on 16 September five years ago. Five years have passed but the noble figure of this faithful servant of the Lord lives on in the minds and hearts of all who knew him. I too cherish many personal memories of the meetings I had with him during the years of his service here in the Roman Curia.

I greet Cardinal Renato Raffaele Martino and Bishop Giampaolo Crepaldi, respectively President and Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, together with their collaborators. I greet the members of the San Matteo Foundation established in memory of Cardinal Van Thuân, and of the International Observatory, called after him and created for the dissemination of the Church's social doctrine, as well as the deceased Cardinal's relatives and friends. I also express my sentiments of deep gratitude to Cardinal Martino for his words on behalf of those present.

I willingly take the opportunity once again to highlight the shining witness of faith which this heroic Pastor bequeathed to us. Bishop Francis Xavier - this is how he liked to introduce himself - was called to the Father's House in autumn 2000, after a long and difficult period of illness faced in total abandonment to God's will. A little earlier, my venerable Predecessor John Paul II had appointed him Vice-President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, of which he later became President, and he set about publishing the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the*

Church. How can we forget the outstanding features of his simple, ready cordiality? How can we not shine light on his conversational skill and his ability to make himself close to everyone? We recall him with deep admiration while we remember the great visions full of hope that inspired him and that he was able to present easily and engagingly: his fervent dedication to disseminating the social doctrine of the Church among the world's poor; his longing for evangelization in Asia, his Continent; his ability to coordinate activities of charity and human promotion which he encouraged and supported in the most remote places of the earth.

Cardinal Van Thuân was a man of hope. He lived on hope and spread it among those he met. It was thanks to this spiritual energy that he was able to withstand all the physical and moral difficulties. Hope sustained him as a Bishop who for 13 years was cut off from his diocesan community; hope helped him to see in the absurdity of the events that had happened to him - he was never tried throughout his lengthy detention - a providential plan of God. He received the news of the disease, the tumour that was later to lead to his death, at the same time that he learned of his appointment as Cardinal by Pope John Paul II, who held him in high esteem and was very fond of him. Cardinal Van Thuân liked to repeat that the Christian is the man of the moment, of the now, of the present time that must be welcomed and experienced with Christ's love. In this ability to live in the present shines forth Cardinal Van Thuân's intimate abandonment in God's hands and the Gospel simplicity that we all admired in him. And could it be possible, he used to wonder, that those who trust in the Heavenly Father then refuse to allow themselves to be embraced by him?

Dear brothers and sisters, I accepted with great joy the news that the Cause of Beatification of this unique prophet of Christian hope is being initiated. As we entrust this chosen soul to the Lord, let us pray that his example may be an effective lesson for us. With this hope, I cordially bless you all.

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